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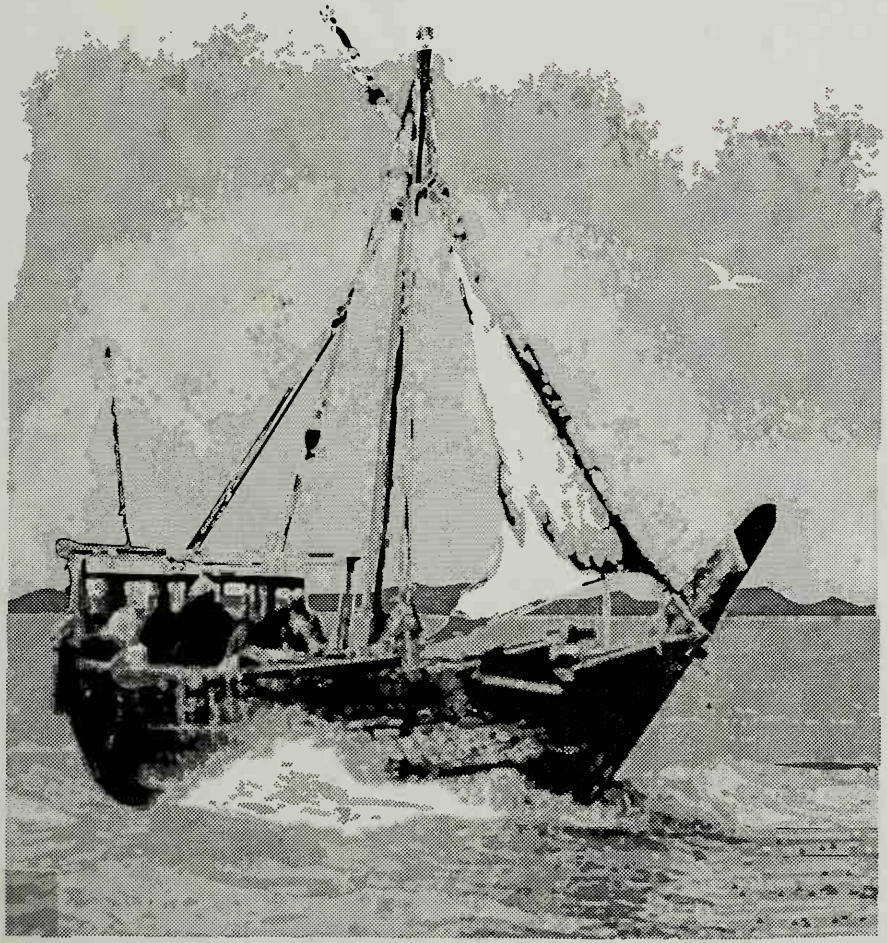

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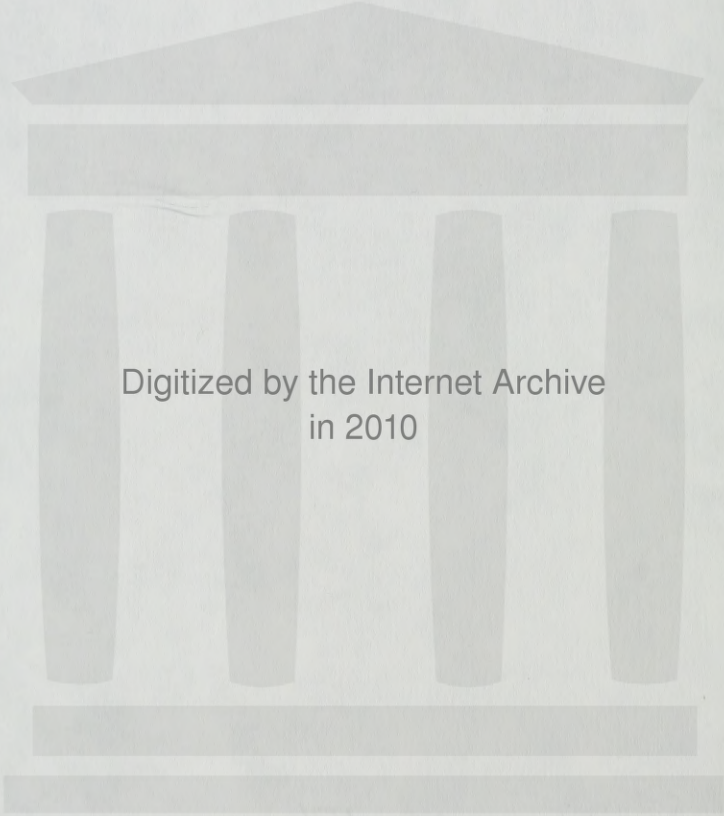
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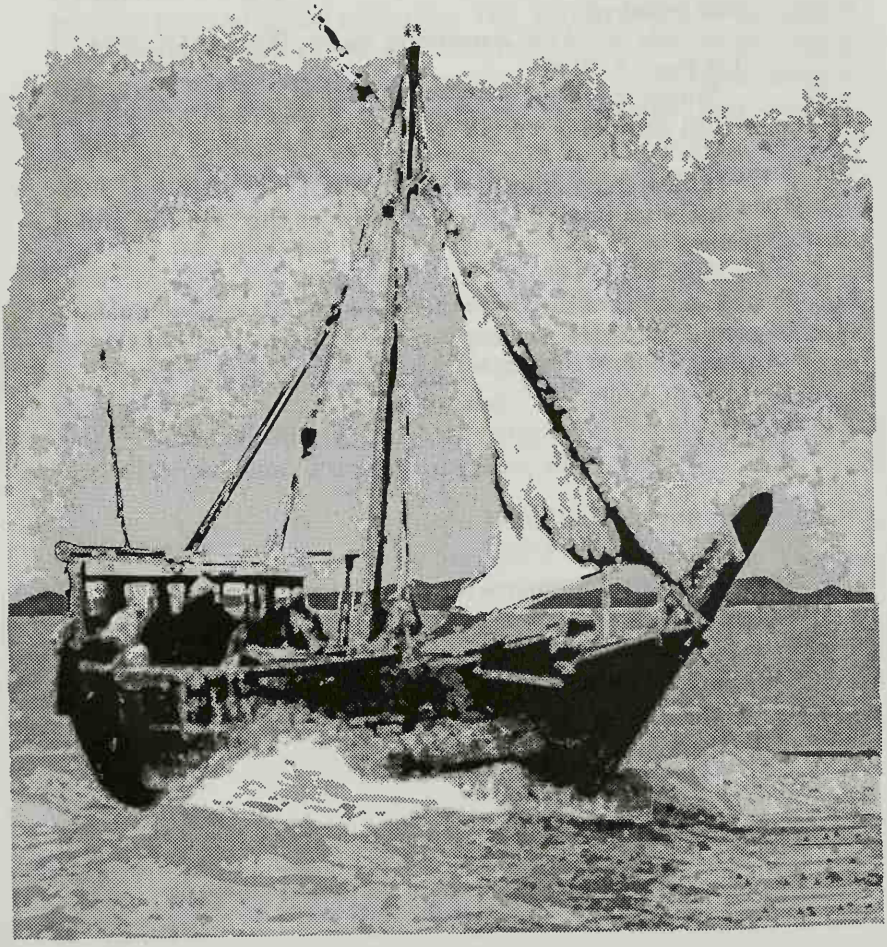

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Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program sponsored by the Department of the Army. The last two pages of this book list the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer
Chief
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Washington, DC 20540–5220

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Graphics were prepared by David P. Cabitto, and Tim L. Merrill prepared map drafts, apart from the topography and drainage map prepared by Harriett R. Blood. David P. Cabitto and the firm of Greenhorne and O'Mara prepared the final maps. Special thanks are owed to Marty Ittner, who prepared the illustrations on the title page of all but one of the chapters, and David P. Cabitto, who did the cover art and art for one of the title pages.

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Preface

Few works offering a close look at the contemporary island societies of the Indian Ocean have been published in the English language. Even fewer works that place those societies in the context of their historical and geographic settings are to be found. This study, *Indian Ocean: Five Island Countries*, seeks to contribute in a modest way to fulfillment of the void, offering a compact and objective exposition of the dominant social, political, and economic institutions of the island countries and a view of their current problems and tensions. Analysis and interpretation by the authors must be judged, however, in the light of the scant nature of available research data in many subject areas.

With considerable justification, the reader may question the exclusion of Sri Lanka (the island nation formerly known as Ceylon, an important political force in the Indian Ocean) from other than the more general discussions in this study. That country's close proximity to, and long historical associations with, the Indian subcontinent and its early tutelage in self-rule under the British, beginning nearly two decades before independence, however, distinguish it quite clearly from the island countries in the southwestern Indian Ocean. Moreover, it has been treated already in a separate volume in the series. By the same token, the reader may question the inclusion of Maldives, insofar as, like Sri Lanka, it, too, lies close to the subcontinent in the northern Indian Ocean. Unlike Sri Lanka, however, Maldives appears nowhere else in the Country Study series, and in the view of the authors it warranted treatment here, especially as it shares some concerns of the island countries in the southwestern ocean. Reunion, although also a Mascarene Island like Mauritius, chose to become an integral part of metropolitan France, and thus is not included in this volume.

Measurements are given in the metric system; a conversion table is provided in the Appendix. The spelling of place-names generally follows that established by the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in its latest available gazetteers for the area. Currency conversion factors appear in the Glossary, which is included for the reader's convenience. Country Profile data, ordinarily appearing in the front matter of books

in this series, in this study are to be found with the relevant chapters.

The body of the text reflects information available as of July 1994. Certain other portions of the text, however, have been updated. The Introduction discusses significant events and trends that have occurred since the completion of research; the Country Profiles include updated information as available; and the Bibliography lists recently published sources thought to be particularly helpful to the reader

Figure 1. Indian Ocean Countries: Geographic Setting, 1994

Introduction

A VAST REGION, the Indian Ocean encompasses an area of about 73.4 million square kilometers, or roughly 14 percent of the earth's surface. The region has been defined variously, depending on whether the Antarctic Sea is included. Commonly, the Indian Ocean is thought to stretch from East Africa (or specifically from the southern tip of Africa at Cape Agulhas where it meets the Atlantic) to Tasmania (where it meets the Pacific), and from Asia to Antarctica.

Historically, the region has played a prominent commercial role in East-West trade since early times. For the colonial powers, particularly Britain and France, in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries until the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869, the islands of the Indian Ocean provided trading posts and refueling locations en route to their colonies in the East. More recently, the Indian Ocean was a focal point of East-West tension because it served as a route through which much oil from the Persian Gulf states passed in shipment to markets elsewhere.

By the mid-1990s, as a result of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the growing participation in international affairs of a number of Indian Ocean littoral states, such as India and South Africa, the balance of power and external influences in the region had altered markedly. In addition, the island nations that constitute the subject of this volume—Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, and Maldives—have experienced a growth in democratic institutions and economic development that has changed their relationships to outside powers. For example, the island states have tended to follow a nonaligned policy in their foreign relations and, reflecting their lack of defense capabilities, have sought to promote the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, in which they include littoral states.

Despite their unique aspects, these island nations have certain features in common. For example, all have been colonies or protectorates of either Britain or France. All have gained their independence since 1965 (1960 in the case of Madagascar) and have been inclined (with the possible exception of Comoros) to institute rule based on the dominance of executive leadership, specifically based on the personality of one man. This has been true even though in several instances such

rule may be under the guise of socialism. Those islands that adopted socialism are now moving toward greater privatization and a free-market system.

Traditionally, agriculture has been the economic basis of all these nations despite the limited land area available for this pursuit. As of the early 1990s, however, the nations were seeking to diversify their economies, stressing fisheries development, tourism, the establishment of export processing zones (EPZs) where raw materials are processed and textiles manufactured, and industrial development, or the creation of international commercial centers. Of these island states, only Madagascar has significant mineral and energy resources, although offshore exploration is taking place near several of the islands.

These island countries consist of multiethnic societies, often with several religious faiths, but some are more homogeneous than others. Notwithstanding this ethnic diversity, in a number of the countries human rights have tended to be limited, particularly with respect to the rights of women, workers, and opposition elements. As democratic institutions are strengthened and public opinion makes itself felt, most of the states are making progress in this regard.

Madagascar

By far the largest of these island nations is Madagascar, which, with nearly 600,000 square kilometers, is somewhat smaller than Texas. Considered by the World Bank (see Glossary) as one of the world's poorest countries, Madagascar had a population estimated at 13.5 million in mid-1994. Nearly 80 percent of the country's population, which consists of some twenty ethnic groups, is engaged in the broad agricultural field, including fishing. After following a socialist path in the 1970s, Madagascar in the 1980s, with the advice of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary), began liberalizing its economy by such measures as establishing an EPZ like that adopted by Mauritius. Madagascar traditionally had had some citizen participation in government through the *fokonolona* (village council) system; however, the country had been ruled almost singlehandedly by the president, Didier Ratsiraka, since 1975. As a result, pressures for greater political participation overtook economic reforms.

A 1992 referendum voted in a new constitution and resulted in multiparty elections in 1993. Opposition leader Albert Zafy

was elected president; his party, the Comité des Forces Vives (Vital Forces Committee, known as Forces Vives), gained one-third of the National Assembly seats, with the remainder scattered among twenty-five parties. In August 1994, Prime Minister Francisque Ravony announced a new cabinet of twenty-four ministers, most of whom were reshuffled from the earlier government but who also reflected a somewhat broader representation of interests.

Madagascar's budget for 1995, presented to the National Assembly in December 1994, was an austerity budget designed to encourage the country's external funding sources. The government aimed to reach a 3.5 percent economic growth rate—the 1994 rate was only 1.29 percent compared with 2.1 percent in 1993—and to cut inflation from 32 percent in 1994 (the rate had been 13 percent in 1993) to 15 percent in 1995. In late 1994, the African Development Bank considered the steep increase in inflation as a potential source of social unrest.

Concurrently, the regime sought to decrease the budget deficit to 6.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) in 1995 from 6.76 percent in 1994. Measures to be taken entailed minimizing customs and tax exemptions, increasing tax collections, and eliminating price controls on certain products. In consequence, the government authorized a 15 percent increase in expenditures for the various ministries, apart from the fields of health and education, which were allowed a 20 percent increase. Despite these proposed solutions, the economy faced a troubled future because 1993 had seen a 13 percent decrease in investments as well as a decrease in production. In addition, the floating of the currency had resulted in a 50 percent devaluation of the Malagasy franc (for value of the Malagasy franc—see Glossary).

In January 1995, Ravony dismissed both the governor of the Central Bank of the Malagasy Republic and the minister of finance—the former because of his reckless policy concerning promissory notes and the latter as a result of his inability to control inflation. (The World Bank and the IMF had made the dismissal of the Central Bank governor a condition for their continued economic assistance.) Among the elements of the Malagasy economy in need of assistance are the country's infrastructure, particularly the railroad system, which suffered the impact of two major cyclones in 1994. Because of the shortage of investment capital to promote economic development in the EPZ, the International Finance Corporation (see World Bank

entry in Glossary) in mid-1994 established the Madagascar Capital Development Fund of approximately US$1.1 million. The government also aims to increase tourism and develop its resources of coal and petroleum as well as shellfish. These moves, if implemented, should ease the problem of unemployment and underemployment, especially among young people—60 percent of the population is under age twenty-five.

To achieve economic progress, Madagascar has had to rely on foreign aid, particularly that from its former colonial power, France. Madagascar's major trading partner, France has not only provided bilateral aid and loans for specific projects but also canceled most of Madagascar's debt. Since South Africa's abandonment of apartheid, its relations with Madagascar have also grown apace, featuring a visit by then South African President Frederik Willem de Klerk in 1990 and the establishment of air and shipping ties as well as diplomatic relations in 1993. Both India and Australia have also sought to strengthen commercial relations with Madagascar.

Possibly in part because of its desire to promote foreign investment in the country, since 1993 Madagascar appears to have paid greater attention to human rights. The United States Department of State has indicated that once the 1993 election had occurred, the situation improved because of lack of violence between the Forces Vives (pro-Zafy) and the pro-Ratsiraka groups. Moreover, the government increased civilian control over the military forces and made use of combined commands of military, gendarmerie, and national police in implementing national security. Greater political stability continues to be essential in order to promote foreign investment.

Mauritius

Mauritius, together with Rodrigues, constitutes part of the volcanic chain of the Mascarene Islands; collectively, the islands are less than half the size of Rhode Island. The country has a varied ethnic composition. The constitution recognizes four groups: Hindus representing about 52 percent of the population, a general category including Creoles and Europeans at about 29 percent, Muslims constituting about 16 percent, and Sino-Mauritians at about 3 percent. English is the island's official language, and both the government and the education system are patterned on the British model.

The economy in 1993 had a healthy growth rate of 5.5 percent, accompanied by an inflation rate of 10.5 percent. Agricul-

ture represents the main economic activity; sugarcane, tea, fresh vegetables, and cut flowers are the main products. To diversify its economy, Mauritius established EPZs in 1971; export production centers on textiles and wearing apparel. The government also seeks to encourage tourism and to develop the private sector generally. Its economic development is such that the World Bank considers it close to becoming an upper-middle-income developing country. If it is to reach such a status, the economy needs to become more technologically oriented and capital-intensive as opposed to labor-intensive.

Such economic development is facilitated by the country's political system. Mauritius has a multiparty system, which it has maintained since independence, and the government represents a coalition of several parties. Mauritius became a republic in 1992, and the president, appointed by the prime minister and approved by the elected National Assembly, has a titular function. In a by-election for the legislature in late January 1995, two opposition candidates won. This result has been viewed as a warning to Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth of popular discontent with his government's policies; the government coalition only mustered 20 percent of the votes.

A member of the Commonwealth of Nations, Mauritius has good relations with the West, particularly France and Britain. Nonetheless, some tension exists with France over its claim to Tromelin Island, and with Britain and the United States over Britain's having allowed the United States to establish a military base on Diego Garcia, claimed by Mauritius. Mauritius also has good ties with a number of African, Arab, and Far Eastern nations.

Mauritius has been a leading exponent of the Indian Ocean zone of peace policy and in this and other instances has sought cooperation with other Indian Ocean island countries. For example, meetings of the Seychelles-Mauritius Joint Cooperation Commission occurred in late January and early February 1995 on Mahé Island, Seychelles. The discussions have led to greater bilateral cooperation in the fields of education, industry, and agriculture. In late March, Mauritius brought together delegations from six other members of the newly formed Indian Ocean Rim Association—Australia, India, Kenya, Oman, Singapore, and South Africa—to promote trade, industry, and economic cooperation. The conference dealt with such measures as standardizing customs procedures and promoting investment.

The growth of foreign investment is often considered to depend, among other factors, on a country's human rights record. With regard to Mauritius, the Department of State has indicated that civilians control the paramilitary special mobile police force used for internal security purposes. Trials are considered to be generally fair. However, the government controls all communications media, which it uses for political purposes; private individuals may not operate broadcasting stations. Workers' rights are limited. The government has taken some steps to improve the rights of women, but they continue to face "legal and societal discrimination."

Comoros

Approximately the same size as Mauritius, Comoros belongs to an archipelago of four main islands of volcanic origin. Of these islands, Mahoré has continued its relationship with France and is not considered part of Comoros. Ethnically, the islands have a mixed population consisting of Arabs, African and Malayo-Indonesian peoples, and Creoles, who are descendants of French settlers. About 86 percent are Sunni Muslims, and Islam is the state religion. Arabic and French are official languages. Schools follow the French education system, but literacy is only about 50 percent.

The country is among the world's poorest, deriving its income primarily from agriculture. Comoros is the world's largest producer of ylang-ylang, used in perfume, and the world's second largest producer of vanilla; cloves are another major crop. Although markets for these products are somewhat unstable, in January 1995 Comoros announced major contracts for the purchase of cloves with the United Arab Emirates and probably with India, and a vanilla purchase contract with the United States. Because of the limited growing area, the islands must import most of their food. Efforts are underway to develop tourism and some forms of industry.

Economic development is linked with recent political steps that Comoros has taken. Comoros approved a new constitution in a referendum in June 1992, under which the president is elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term. The president in turn selects the ministers, the prime minister coming from the majority party in the Federal Assembly. The assembly is the elected body of the bicameral legislature; the Electoral College appoints the Senate. In October 1994, after much infighting among members of the ruling party, President Said Mohamed

Djohar named a new government, dismissing the previous prime minister, who had advocated the privatization of the national airlines, Air Comores. The airlines issue involved two of the president's sons-in-law. The previous prime minister was also unpopular for implementing a number of economic reforms demanded by the World Bank and the IMF.

In late September 1994, the IMF expressed its "disappointment" with the economic progress of Comoros, following the visit of an IMF mission to the island in late August and early September. In the first half of 1994, exports decreased 5 percent in volume compared with 1993; this decrease occurred in spite of the 33 percent devaluation of the Comoran franc (for value of the Comoran franc—see Glossary) in January 1994. Revenues were "disappointing" because of reduced trade and failure to recover customs duties due. Most IMF economic indicators had not been met, and arrears on external debt had been reduced only by one-third the targeted amount. As a result, the IMF recommended a freeze on 40 percent of budget amounts for the offices of the president, the prime minister, and the Federal Assembly as well as a freeze on hiring new government employees until personnel cuts had been made.

For its economic development, Comoros depended heavily on external sources, particularly France. Comoros had good relations with France and good regional relations with conservative Arab states and members of the Indian Ocean Commission. Therefore, it surprised many that in November 1994, while attending the Franco-African summit in Biarritz, Djohar announced the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. However, upon his return to Moroni the president amended his statement to indicate that diplomatic relations would be regularized only after a peace agreement had been signed among Israel, Syria, and Lebanon and the issue of Jerusalem had been resolved.

A source of friction in its relations with other countries is the government's human rights record. This record did not improve in 1994, according to the Department of State, and featured restrictions on the right of assembly and freedom of the press. Several persons were killed on Mohéli by security forces in June 1994 in an antigovernment demonstration. Furthermore, a number of persons involved in an abortive coup in September 1992 continued to be held incommunicado without charge or trial in early 1995. The regime closed the only nongovernment radio station in 1994 and on one occasion refused

an opposition party the right to hold a rally. Although women have the vote, there are no women in the legislature or the cabinet. Unions have the right to bargain, but more than 75 percent of the labor force is unemployed, so collective bargaining does not, in fact, occur.

Seychelles

Less than one-quarter the size of Comoros, Seychelles consists of an archipelago of 115 islands, most coralline and the rest granitic. The relatively homogeneous population of mixed European and African descent uses three official languages: Creole, English, and French, with a claimed literacy of 85 percent.

Seychelles has a comparatively high per capita GDP of US$5,900 and in the early 1990s was moving away from socialism toward a more liberal economy with greater privatization. Tourism is the major economic activity because the small area of cultivable land limits agriculture, and the small market limits industry. Fishing has considerable potential for diversifying the Seychellois economy. The government is encouraging the fisheries sector, and in August 1994 the Western Indian Ocean Tuna Organization held its meeting on Mahé, with representatives of Comoros, Mauritius, and Seychelles present as well as an observer from Madagascar. Among topics of discussion was the standardization of terms for granting fishing permits because French, Spanish, and Japanese ships conduct extensive fishing in the area. Seychelles alone had fifty-two licensing agreements in effect in early 1995, of which thirty-three were with European Union countries. Furthermore, the African Development Bank in December 1994 was engaged in restructuring the Seychelles state-owned tuna processing firm, Conserveries de l'Océan Indien, in order to make it eligible for privatization. In addition to tuna fishing, for which Victoria is one of the world's largest ports, Seychelles seeks to develop its shrimp industry and began commercial shrimp operations in 1993.

Furthermore, boasting of its good quality telecommunications system, its privatization of Victoria port in 1994, and new regulations to encourage the private sector, specifically the legal environment for investment, Seychelles is promoting itself as an international business center. A partial basis for such promotion lies in the country's good relations with Britain, France, and such littoral states as South Africa, India, and

Australia. Measures contemplated to further the private sector include the establishment of an EPZ and tax measures to reduce employer social security contributions for employees.

It is difficult to reconcile some of these proposed steps with the World Bank's 1993 report entitled *Poverty in Paradise* (Mark Twain had also referred to Seychelles as "paradise"). According to the report, "In 1993, almost 20 percent of the population were estimated to be living below the poverty line" of 900 Seychelles rupees (for value of the Seychelles rupee—see Glossary), or about US$195 per household per month. The World Bank criticized Seychelles's relatively low expenditure on education, especially secondary education, and the resultant lack of qualified workers in the education, health, finance, and construction fields. In spite of this criticism, the 1995 budget announced by the Ministry of Finance in late 1994 proposed a further 21 percent cut in the education budget, thereby exacerbating the situation with regard to qualified workers.

The relationship of the economy to the country's political system has been very close because Seychelles has followed a socialist form of government. Having gained its independence from Britain in 1976, Seychelles became a one-party socialist state under President France Albert René in 1977. After adopting a new constitution by referendum in 1992, Seychelles held its first multiparty elections in 1993. René was reelected, and his Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) won twenty-seven of the thirty-three seats in the People's Assembly (some election irregularities are considered to have taken place). As a result of political patronage, control of jobs, government contracts, and resources, the Department of State indicated that the SPPF dominated the country. Moreover, the president completely controlled the security apparatus, including the national guard, the army, the police, and an armed paramilitary unit.

In 1994 progress was made with regard to human rights under this controlled structure. However, the government has a "near monopoly on the media," and freedom of speech and press are limited by the ease with which law suits can be brought against journalists. In addition, because the leadership of both the SPPF and most opposition parties is white, despite the Creole popular majority, there is a perception that nonwhites lack a significant voice.

Maldives

Maldives, smaller in area than Seychelles, includes some 1,200 coralline islands grouped in a double chain of nineteen atolls. The majority of these islands, which range from one to two square kilometers in area, are uninhabited. The people represent a homogeneous mixture of Sinhalese, Dravidian, Arab, Australasian, and African groups who speak a Dhivehi language. Sunni Muslims in faith, most Maldivians attend Quranic schools. Islam is the official religion, all citizens must be Muslims, and the practice of a faith other than Islam is forbidden. The country claims 98 percent literacy.

Ranked by the United Nations as one of the world's least developed countries, Maldives has a GDP based 17 percent on tourism; 15 percent on fishing, which is undergoing further development; and 10 percent on agriculture. Maldives' 1994 annual per capita income of US$620 is twice that of India. Maldives has some 17,000 foreign workers, many from India and Sri Lanka, most of whom are employed in resort hotels so that Maldivian Muslims need not serve alcoholic beverages.

Possibly in keeping with its more traditional culture, the country has a highly centralized presidential government, based on its 1968 constitution. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who has ruled since 1978, was reelected president for a five-year term in 1993. Members of the unicameral Majlis, or legislature, also serve five-year terms; forty are elected, and eight are appointed by the president. The president, who exercises control over most aspects of the country, also holds the posts of minister of defense and minister of finance. Political parties are officially discouraged as contrary to homogeneity. Maldives follows a nonalignment policy with regard to foreign affairs but as a member of the Commonwealth of Nations has particularly close relations with Britain.

The somewhat authoritarian nature of the government is reflected in the country's record on human rights. The Department of State has indicated that in 1994 Maldives restricted freedom of speech, press, and religion. Instances also occurred of arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention of individuals as well as banishment to distant atolls. Although civil law exists, Islamic sharia law also applies and has limited the rights of women; for example, in accordance with Muslim practice, the testimony of one man is equivalent to that of two women. Nonetheless, in 1994 two women served in the Majlis and one in the cabinet. The rights of workers are also limited in that

they may not form unions or strike. Freedom of the press was advanced somewhat in 1994 with the government's establishment of a Press Council designed to protect journalists.

* * *

The degree to which Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, and Maldives will separately and collectively promote democratic institutions, human rights, and economic development and diversification in the late 1990s remains to be seen. These island nations, with the exception of Maldives (which is located considerably to the northeast of the others), are already members of a common body, the Indian Ocean Commission, which seeks to promote commercial and social aspects of their relationship. The commission, or perhaps the larger Indian Ocean Rim Association, may broaden its concerns to include such areas as overall economic policy and defense matters. The amount of cooperation that may develop among these island states will depend to a great extent on the relative sense of stability and security of each of the nations involved.

May 31, 1995 Helen Chapin Metz

Chapter 1. Madagascar

National emblem of Madagascar

Country Profile

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Madagascar.

Short Name: Madagascar.

Term for Citizens: Malagasy.

Capital: Antananarivo.

Date of Independence: June 26, 1960.

Geography

Size: 587,040 square kilometers.

Topography: East coast has lowlands leading to steep bluffs and central highlands; Tsaratanana Massif in north with volcanic mountains; west coast with many protected harbors and broad plains; and southwest with plateau and desert region.

Climate: Two seasons: hot, rainy from November to April; cooler, dry season from May to October; southeastern trade winds dominate; occasional cyclones.

Society

Population: July 1994 estimate 13,427,758. Annual growth rate 3.19 percent in 1994. Density 2.4 per square kilometer in 1994.

Ethnic Groups: Some twenty ethnic groups of which principal ones are central highlanders (Merina and related Betsileo) and *côtiers* of mixed Arab, African, Malayo-Indonesian ancestry. Other groups are Comorans, French, Indo-Pakistanis, and Chinese.

Languages: Malagasy belonging to Malayo-Polynesian language family; French also used extensively.

Religion: Estimated 55 percent hold indigenous beliefs; 40 percent Christian, evenly divided between Roman Catholics and Protestants; 5 percent Muslim.

Education and Literacy: Education compulsory for children ages six to fourteen; higher education available through University of Madagascar with six campuses. Literacy estimated at 80 percent in 1991.

Health: Economic decline has caused deterioration of medical services; 35 percent of population lacked adequate access to health services in early 1990s; infant mortality 114 per 1,000 in 1991. Major diseases malaria, schistosomiasis, tuberculosis, and leprosy as well as sexually transmitted diseases. Traditional medicine popular, especially in rural areas.

Economy

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Estimated at US$10.4 billion in 1993. Economic growth rate 1 percent in 1992.

Gross National Product (GNP) per Capita: US$210 in 1991; rated tenth poorest country in world by World Bank.

Agriculture: Constituted 33 percent of GDP in 1993, provided almost 80 percent of exports, and in 1992 employed almost 80 percent of labor force; 16 percent of cultivated land is irrigated. Major crops: coffee, vanilla, sugarcane, cloves, cocoa, rice, cassava, bananas, peanuts; widespread cattle raising; also extensive fishing.

Industry, Mining, and Energy: Responsible for 13 percent of GDP in 1993; major sectors food-processing, mining, and energy; and in export processing zones clothing manufacturing. Country has many minerals, but exploitation has been disappointing. Dependent on imported oil and local firewood for energy.

Exports: Estimated at US$311 million in 1992. Major exports coffee, vanilla, cloves, shellfish, and sugar. Main markets

France, United States, Germany, and Japan.

Imports: Estimated US$614 million in 1992. Major imports intermediate goods, capital goods, petroleum, consumer goods, food. Main suppliers France, Japan, and Germany.

Balance of Payments: External debt in November 1993 more than US$4 billion; debt has been rescheduled with Paris Club (see Glossary) and London Club (see Glossary).

Currency and Exchange Rate: 1 Malagasy franc (FMG) = 100 centimes; in May 1995, US$1.00 = FMG4,236.9.

Inflation Rate: Estimated at 20 percent in 1992.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Highways: About 4,000 kilometers of 40,000-kilometer road system asphalted in 1994.

Railroads: In 1994 some 1,095 kilometers of 1.000-meter gauge track in two separate systems: Antananarivo to Toamasina and Fianarantsoa to Manakara.

Ports: Fifteen major ports of which Toamasina, Mahajanga, and Antsiranana most important.

Airports: About 105 of total airports usable; of these thirty had permanent-surface runways in 1994.

Telecommunications: Telephone service sparse; most telephones located in Antananarivo. Two satellite ground stations provide excellent international links via International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) Indian Ocean satellite and Symphonie ground station with European telecommunications satellite. Seventeen government-owned amplitude modulation (AM) stations, three frequency modulation (FM) stations.

Government and Politics

Government: Constitution approved August 19, 1992, by

national referendum. Constitution establishes separation of powers among executive, legislative, and judicial branches; multiparty political system; and protection of human rights and freedom of speech. President elected by universal suffrage for five-year period with two-term limit. Prime minister nominated by bicameral parliament composed of Senate and National Assembly, and approved by president. Supreme Court has eleven members and forms apex of other judicial bodies. Local government consists of twenty-eight regions with decentralized powers in economic field.

Politics: In first legislative elections of Third Republic in 1993, more than 120 political parties entered 4,000 candidates for 138 seats. Proportional representation list system encourages candidacies. Traditional village council (*fokonolona*) system supplements modern political system.

Foreign Relations: Good relations with many countries, particularly France and the West; in post-Cold War era, seeking diversified ties with East and West, including Arab countries and Far East.

National Security

Armed Forces: Popular Armed Forces (including aeronaval forces—consisting of navy and air force), Presidential Guard. In 1994 army had about 20,000 personnel, navy about 500 including 100 marines, air force about 500.

Military Budget: In 1994 estimated at US$37.6 million.

Major Military Units: Army in 1994 had two battalions, one engineer regiment. Army equipment included twelve light tanks, reconnaissance vehicles, armored personnel carriers, and some towed artillery. Navy had one patrol craft and three landing craft. Air force had twelve combat aircraft.

Paramilitary: In 1994 about 7,500 gendarmerie, including maritime police.

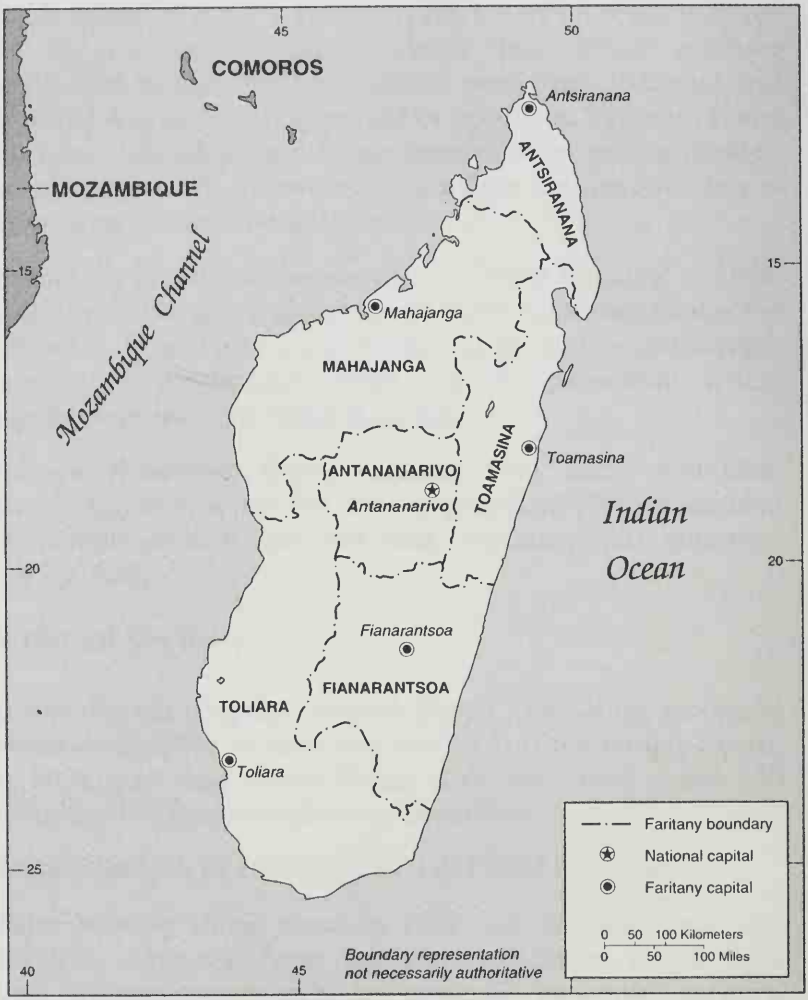


Figure 2. Madagascar: Administrative Divisions, 1994

THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR, formerly known as the Malagasy Republic and the Democratic Republic of Madagascar, has undergone significant socioeconomic and political changes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Occupying a strategic location off the southeast coast of Africa, the island historically became the target of British and French imperial ambitions. Ultimately, the competition resulted in French colonization at the end of the nineteenth century. The country gained full independence from colonial rule on June 26, 1960. Philibert Tsiranana headed the conservative regime of the First Republic, superseded in 1975 by a Marxist-oriented military regime under Lieutenant Commander Didier Ratsiraka.

In the face of rising political dissent and socioeconomic decline that reached its height at the beginning of the 1990s, the Second Republic succumbed to the wave of democratization spreading throughout the African continent. On March 27, 1993, the inauguration of Albert Zafy as the third elected president of Madagascar since independence marked the beginning of the Third Republic.

Historical Setting

Precolonial Era, Prior to 1894

The ruins of fortifications built by Arab traders as far back as the ninth century underscore Madagascar's historical role as a destination for travelers from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Not until the beginning of the sixteenth century, however, did European ships flying Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French flags explore Madagascar's shoreline. Beginning in 1643, several French settlements emerged; the best known of these, Tôlanaro (formerly Faradofay) on the southeast coast, lasted for more than thirty years. The settlement survived in part because the colonists had taken pains to establish cordial relations with the Antanosy, the ethnic group inhabiting the area. Relations deteriorated later, however, and in 1674 a massacre of nearly all the inhabitants ended French colonization endeavors for more than a century; survivors fled by sea to the neighboring territory of Reunion.

This early checking of French imperial designs coincided with the spread of piracy into the Indian Ocean. In the absence of a significant naval power in waters remote from Europe, privateer vessels attacked ships of many nations for nearly forty years. The favorite hunting grounds were in the north in the Arabian Sea and Red Sea areas, but Madagascar was a popular hiding place where crews could recuperate and replenish supplies for another attack. By this time, the institution of slavery also had been implanted on the island. Madagascar became a source of slaves, not only for the neighboring islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues, but also for more distant points, including the Western Hemisphere.

Madagascar's social and political structure facilitated the slave trade. Within several small coastal kingdoms, stratified societies of nobles, commoners, and slaves gave allegiance to a single king or queen. For example, the Sakalava ethnic group dominated the western and northern portions of Madagascar in two separate kingdoms. Menabe, on the barren western grasslands, had its first capital at Toliara; Boina, in the northwest, included the port of Mahajanga. The towns became centers of trade where cattle and slaves, taken in war, were exchanged with European merchants for guns and other manufactured goods. These political domains were complemented by the Betsimisaraka kingdom along the east coast, and the southern coastal kingdoms dominated by the Mahafaly and the Antandroy ethnic groups.

The most powerful of Madagascar's kingdoms—the one that eventually established hegemony over a great portion of the island—was that developed by the Merina ethnic group. Before the Merina emerged as the dominant political power on the island in the nineteenth century, they alternated between periods of political unity and periods in which the kingdom separated into smaller political units. The location of the Merina in the central highlands afforded them some protection from the ravages of warfare that recurred among the coastal kingdoms. The distinction, recognized both locally and internationally, between the central highlanders (the Merina) and the *côtiers* (inhabitants of the coastal areas) would soon exert a major impact on Madagascar's political system (see Population and Ethnicity, this ch.). Organized like the coastal kingdoms in a hierarchy of nobles, commoners, and slaves, the Merina developed a unique political institution known as the *fokonolona* (village council). Through the *fokonolona*, village

elders and other local notables were able to enact regulations and exert a measure of local control in such matters as public works and security.

Two monarchs played key roles in establishing Merina political dominance over Madagascar. The first, who ruled under the name of Andrianampoinimerina (r. 1797–1810), seized the throne of one of the Merina kingdoms in 1787. By 1806 he had conquered the remaining three kingdoms and united them within the former boundaries of Imerina, the capital established at the fortified city of Antananarivo. Radama I (r. 1810–28), an able and forward-looking monarch, succeeded to the throne in 1810 upon the death of his father. By adroitly playing off competing British and French interests in the island, he was able to extend Merina authority over nearly the entire island of Madagascar. Radama I first conquered the Betsileo ethnic group in the southern part of the central highlands and subsequently overpowered the Sakalava, an ethnic group that also sought at times to assert its hegemony over other groups. With the help of the British, who wanted a strong kingdom to offset French influence, Radama I modernized the armed forces. In 1817 the peoples of the east coast, facing an army of 35,000 soldiers, submitted with little or no protest; Radama then conquered the entire southeast as far as Tôlanaro. Particularly barren or impenetrable parts of the island escaped conquest, especially in the extreme south, but before his death Radama I succeeded in bringing the major and more hospitable portions of the country under Merina rule.

Radama I's interest in modernization along Western lines extended to social and political matters. He organized a cabinet and encouraged the Protestant London Missionary Society to establish schools and churches and to introduce the printing press—a move that was to have far-reaching implications for the country. The society made nearly half a million converts, and its teachers devised a written form of the local language, Malagasy, using the Latin alphabet. By 1828 several thousand persons, primarily Merina, had become literate, and a few young persons were being sent to Britain for schooling. Later the Merina dialect of Malagasy became the official language. Malagasy-language publications were established and circulated among the Merina-educated elite; by 1896 some 164,000 children, mainly Merina and Betsileo, attended the mission's primary schools. Along with new ideas came some development of local manufacturing. Much productive time was spent,

however, in military campaigns to expand territory and acquire slaves for trade.

The reign of Radama I's wife and successor, Queen Ranavalona I (r. 1828–61), was essentially reactionary, reflecting her distrust of foreign influence. Under the oligarchy that ruled in her name, rivals were slain, numerous Protestant converts were persecuted and killed, and many Europeans fled the island. The ruling elite held all the land and monopolized commerce, except for the handful of Europeans allowed to deal in cattle, rice, and other commodities. Remunerations to the queen provided the French traders a supply of slaves and a monopoly in the slave trade. Enjoying particular favor owing to his remarkable accomplishments was French artisan Jean Laborde, who established at Mantasoa, near Antananarivo, a manufacturing complex and agricultural research station where he manufactured commodities ranging from silk and soap to guns, tools, and cement.

During the reign of Radama II (r. 1861–63), the pendulum once again swung toward modernization and cordial relations with Western nations, particularly France. Radama II made a treaty of perpetual friendship with France, but his brief rule ended with his assassination by a group of nobles alarmed by his pro-French stance. He was succeeded by his widow, who ruled until 1868, during which time she annulled the treaty with France and the charter of Laborde's company.

After 1868 a Merina leader, Rainilaiarivony, ruled the monarchy. To avoid giving either the French or the British a pretext for intervention, Rainilaiarivony emphasized modernization of the society and tried to curry British favor without giving offense to the French. He made concessions to both countries, signing a commercial treaty with France in 1868 and with Britain in 1877. Important social developments under his leadership included the outlawing of polygamy and the slave trade; the promulgation of new legal codes; the spread of education, especially among the Merina; and the conversion of the monarchy in 1869 to Protestantism.

Colonial Era, 1894–1960

The French largely ended the attempts of Malagasy rulers to stymie foreign influence by declaring a protectorate over the entire island in 1894. A protectorate over northwest Madagascar, based on treaties signed with the Sakalava during the 1840s, had existed since 1882. But Queen Ranavalona III

refused to recognize the 1894 effort to subordinate her kingdom to French rule. As a result, a French expeditionary force occupied Antananarivo in September 1895. A wave of antiforeign, anti-Christian rioting ensued. In 1896 France declared Madagascar a French colony and deported the queen and the prime minister—first to Reunion, then to Algeria.

Nationalist sentiment against French colonial rule eventually emerged among a small group of Merina intellectuals who had been educated by Europeans and exposed to Western intellectual thought. The group, based in Antananarivo, was led by a Malagasy Protestant clergyman, Pastor Ravelojoana, who was especially inspired by the Japanese model of modernization. A secret society dedicated to affirming Malagasy cultural identity was formed in 1913, calling itself Iron and Stone Ramification (Vy Vato Sakelika—VVS). Although the VVS was brutally suppressed, its actions eventually led French authorities to provide the Malagasy with their first representative voice in government.

Malagasy veterans of military service in France during World War I bolstered the embryonic nationalist movement. Throughout the 1920s, the nationalists stressed labor reform and equality of civil and political status for the Malagasy, stopping short of advocating independence. For example, the French League for Madagascar under the leadership of Anatole France demanded French citizenship for all Malagasy people in recognition of their country's wartime contribution of soldiers and resources. A number of veterans who remained in France were exposed to French political thought, most notably the anticolonial and pro-independence platforms of French socialist parties. Jean Ralaimongo, for example, returned to Madagascar in 1924 and became embroiled in labor questions that were causing considerable tension throughout the island.

Among the first concessions to Malagasy equality was the formation in 1924 of two economic and financial delegations. One was composed of French settlers, the other of twenty-four Malagasy representatives elected by the Council of Notables in each of twenty-four districts. The two sections never met together, and neither had real decision-making authority.

Only in the aftermath of World War II was France willing to accept a form of Malagasy self-rule under French tutelage. In the fall of 1945, separate French and Malagasy electoral colleges voted to elect representatives from Madagascar to the Constituent Assembly of the Fourth Republic in Paris. The two

delegates chosen by the Malagasy, Joseph Raseta and Joseph Ravoahangy, both campaigned to implement the ideal of the self-determination of peoples affirmed by the Atlantic Charter of 1941 and by the historic Brazzaville Conference of 1944.

Raseta and Ravoahangy, together with Jacques Rabemananjara, a writer long resident in Paris, had organized the Democratic Movement for Malagasy Restoration (Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache—MDRM), the foremost among several political parties formed in Madagascar by early 1946. Although Protestant Merina were well represented in the MDRM's higher echelons, the party's 300,000 members were drawn from a broad political base reaching across the entire island and crosscutting ethnic and social divisions. Several smaller MDRM rivals included the Party of the Malagasy Disinherited (Parti des Déshérités Malgaches), whose members were mainly *côtiers* or descendants of slaves from the central highlands.

The 1946 constitution of the French Fourth Republic made Madagascar a *territoire d'outre-mer* (overseas territory) within the French Union. It accorded full citizenship to all Malagasy parallel with that enjoyed by citizens in France. But the assimilationist policy inherent in its framework was incongruent with the MDRM goal of full independence for Madagascar, so Ravoahangy and Raseta abstained from voting. The two delegates also objected to the separate French and Malagasy electoral colleges, even though Madagascar was represented in the French National Assembly. The constitution divided Madagascar administratively into a number of provinces, each of which was to have a locally elected provincial assembly. Not long after, a National Representative Assembly was constituted at Antananarivo. In the first elections for the provincial assemblies, the MDRM won all seats or a majority of seats, except in Mahajanga Province.

Despite these reforms, the political scene in Madagascar remained unstable. Economic and social concerns, including food shortages, black-market scandals, labor conscription, renewed ethnic tensions, and the return of soldiers from France, strained an already volatile situation. Many of the veterans felt they had been less well treated by France than had veterans from metropolitan France; others had been politically radicalized by their wartime experiences. The blend of fear, respect, and emulation on which Franco-Malagasy relations had been based seemed at an end.

On March 29, 1947, Malagasy nationalists revolted against the French. Although the uprising eventually spread over one-third of the island, the French were able to restore order after reinforcements arrived from France. Casualties among the Malagasy were estimated in the 60,000 to 80,000 range (later reports estimated 11,000 casualties, of whom 180 were non-Malagasy). The group of leaders responsible for the uprising, which came to be referred to as the Revolt of 1947, never has been identified conclusively. Although the MDRM leadership consistently maintained its innocence, the French outlawed the party. French military courts tried the military leaders of the revolt and executed twenty of them. Other trials produced, by one report, some 5,000 to 6,000 convictions, and penalties ranged from brief imprisonment to death.

In 1956 France's socialist government renewed the French commitment to greater autonomy in Madagascar and other colonial possessions by enacting the *loi-cadre* (enabling law). The *loi-cadre* provided for universal suffrage and was the basis for parliamentary government in each colony. In the case of Madagascar, the law established executive councils to function alongside provincial and national assemblies, and dissolved the separate electoral colleges for the French and Malagasy groups. The provision for universal suffrage had significant implications in Madagascar because of the basic ethnopolitical split between the Merina and the *côtiers*, reinforced by the divisions between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Superior armed strength and educational and cultural advantages had given the Merina a dominant influence on the political process during much of the country's history. The Merina were heavily represented in the Malagasy component of the small elite to whom suffrage had been restricted in the earlier years of French rule. Now the *côtiers*, who outnumbered the Merina, would be a majority.

The end of the 1950s was marked by growing debate over the future of Madagascar's relationship with France. Two major political parties emerged. The newly created Social Democratic Party of Madagascar (Parti Social Démocrate de Madagascar—PSD) favored self-rule while maintaining close ties with France. The PSD was led by Philibert Tsiranana, a well-educated Tsimihety from the northern coastal region who was one of three Malagasy deputies elected in 1956 to the National Assembly in Paris. The PSD built upon Tsiranana's traditional political stronghold of Mahajanga in northwest Madagascar and rapidly

extended its sources of support by absorbing most of the smaller parties that had been organized by the *côtiers*. In sharp contrast, those advocating complete independence from France came together under the auspices of the Congress Party for the Independence of Madagascar (Antokon'ny Kongresy Fanafahana an'i Madagasikara—AKFM). Primarily based in Antananarivo and Antsiranana, party support centered among the Merina under the leadership of Richard Andriamanjato, himself a Merina and a member of the Protestant clergy. To the consternation of French policy makers, the AKFM platform called for nationalization of foreign-owned industries, collectivization of land, the "Malagachization" of society away from French values and customs (most notably use of the French language), international nonalignment, and exit from the Franc Zone (see Glossary).

Independence, the First Republic, and the Military Transition, 1960–75

After France adopted the Constitution of the Fifth Republic under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle, on September 28, 1958, Madagascar held a referendum to determine whether the country should become a self-governing republic within the French community. The AKFM and other nationalists opposed to the concept of limited self-rule mustered about 25 percent of votes cast. The vast majority of the population at the urging of the PSD leadership voted in favor of the referendum. The vote led to the election of Tsiranana as the country's first president on April 27, 1959. After a year of negotiations between Tsiranana and his French counterparts, Madagascar's status as a self-governing republic officially was altered on June 26, 1960, to that of a fully independent and sovereign state. The cornerstone of Tsiranana's government was the signing with France of fourteen agreements and conventions designed to maintain and strengthen Franco-Malagasy ties. These agreements were to provide the basis for increasing opposition from Tsiranana's critics.

A spirit of political reconciliation prevailed in the early 1960s. By achieving independence and obtaining the release of the MDRM leaders detained since the Revolt of 1947, Tsiranana had co-opted the chief issues on which the more aggressively nationalist elements had built much of their support. Consistent with Tsiranana's firm commitment to remain attached to Western civilization, the new regime made plain its

View of Antananarivo from the Royal Hill
Courtesy Brian Kensley

intent to maintain strong ties to France and the West in the economic, defense, and cultural spheres. Not entirely sanguine about this prospect, the opposition initially concurred in the interest of consolidating the gains of the previous decade, and most ethnic and regional interests supported Tsiranana.

Similar to other African leaders during the early independence era, Tsiranana oversaw the consolidation of his own party's power at the expense of other parties. A political system that strongly favored the incumbent complemented these actions. For example, although the political process allowed minority parties to participate, the constitution mandated a winner-take-all system that effectively denied the opposition a voice in governance. Tsiranana's position was further strengthened by the broad, multiethnic popular base of the PSD among the *côtiers*, whereas the opposition was severely disorganized. The AKFM continued to experience intraparty rifts between leftist and ultranationalist, more orthodox Marxist factions; it was unable to capitalize on increasingly active but relatively less privileged Malagasy youth because the party's base was the Merina middle class.

A new force on the political scene provided the first serious challenge to the Tsiranana government in April 1971. The National Movement for the Independence of Madagascar (Mouvement National pour l'Indépendance de Madagascar—Monima) led a peasant uprising in Toliara Province. The creator and leader of Monima was Monja Jaona, a *côtier* from the south who also participated in the Revolt of 1947. The main issue was government pressure for tax collection at a time when local cattle herds were being ravaged by disease. The protesters

attacked military and administrative centers in the area, apparently hoping for support in the form of weapons and reinforcements from China. Such help never arrived, and the revolt was harshly and quickly suppressed. An estimated fifty to 1,000 persons died, Monima was dissolved, and Monima leaders, including Jaona and several hundred protesters, were arrested and deported to the island of Nosy-Lava.

Another movement came on the scene in early 1972, in the form of student protests in Antananarivo. A general strike involving the nation's roughly 100,000 secondary-level students focused on three principal issues: ending the cultural cooperation agreements with France; replacing educational programs designed for schools in France and taught by French teachers with programs emphasizing Malagasy life and culture and taught by Malagasy instructors; and increasing access for economically underprivileged youth to secondary-level institutions. By early May, the PSD sought to end the student strike at any cost; on May 12 and 13, the government arrested several hundred student leaders and sent them to Nosy-Lava. Authorities also closed the schools and banned demonstrations.

Mounting economic stagnation—as revealed in scarcities of investment capital, a general decline in living standards, and the failure to meet even modest development goals—further undermined the government's position. Forces unleashed by the growing economic crisis combined with student unrest to create an opposition alliance. Workers, public servants, peasants, and many unemployed urban youth of Antananarivo joined the student strike, which spread to the provinces. Protesters set fire to the town hall and to the offices of a French-language newspaper in the capital.

The turning point occurred on May 13 when the Republican Security Force (Force Républicaine de Sécurité—FRS) opened fire on the rioters; in the ensuing melee, between fifteen and forty persons were killed and about 150 injured. Tsiranana declared a state of national emergency and on May 18 dissolved his government, effectively ending the First Republic. He then turned over full power to the National Army under the command of General Gabriel Ramanantsoa, a politically conservative Merina and former career officer in the French army. The National Army had maintained strict political neutrality in the crisis, and its intervention to restore order was welcomed by protesters and opposition elements.

The Ramanantsoa military regime could not resolve rising economic and ethnic problems, and narrowly survived an attempted coup d'état on December 31, 1974. The fact that the coup was led by several *côtier* officers against a Merina military leader underscored the growing Merina/*côtier* polarization in the military. In an attempt at restoring unity, Ramanantsoa, on February 5, 1975, turned over power to Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava (a Merina with a less "aristocratic" background). Five days later, Ratsimandrava was assassinated, and a National Military Directorate was formed to restore order by declaring martial law, strictly censoring political expression, and suspending all political parties.

The political transition crisis was resolved on June 15, 1975, when the National Military Directorate selected Lieutenant Commander Didier Ratsiraka as head of state and president of a new ruling body, the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC). The choice of Ratsiraka allayed ethnic concerns because he was a *côtier* belonging to the Betsimisaraka ethnic group. In addition, Ratsiraka—a dedicated socialist—was perceived by his military peers as a consensus candidate capable of forging unity among the various leftist political parties (such as AKFM and Monima), students, urban workers, the peasantry, and the armed forces.

The Second Republic, 1975–92

Ratsiraka was elected to a seven-year term as president in a national referendum on December 21, 1975, confirming the mandate for consensus and inaugurating Madagascar's Second Republic.

The guiding principle of Ratsiraka's administration was the need for a socialist "revolution from above." Specifically, he sought to radically change Malagasy society in accordance with programs and principles incorporated into the *Charter of the Malagasy Socialist Revolution*, popularly referred to as the "Red Book" (Boky Mena). According to this document, the primary goal of the newly renamed Democratic Republic of Madagascar was to build a "new society" founded on socialist principles and guided by the actions of the "five pillars of the revolution": the SRC, peasants and workers, young intellectuals, women, and the Popular Armed Forces. "The socialist revolution," explains the Red Book, "is the only choice possible for us in order to achieve rapid economic and cultural development in an autonomous, humane, and harmonious manner." The Red Book

advocated a new foreign policy based on the principle of nonalignment, and domestic policies focused on renovating the *fokonolona*, decentralizing the administration, and fomenting economic development through rigorous planning and popular input.

Several early policies collectively decided by Ratsiraka and other members of the SRC set the tone of the revolution from above. The first major SRC decision was to bring the French-held sectors of the economy under government control. This "economic decolonization" was welcomed by nationalists, who long had clamored for economic and cultural independence from France. The government also lifted martial law but retained rigid press censorship. Finally, the SRC ordered the closure of an earth satellite tracking station operated by the United States as part of its commitment to nonaligned foreign relations.

Political consolidation proceeded apace following the addition of ten civilians to the SRC in January 1976. This act constituted the beginning of a civil-military partnership in that the SRC became more representative of the country's major political tendencies and ethnic communities. In March the Vanguard of the Malagasy Revolution (Antokin'ny Revolisiona Malagasy—Arema) was founded as the government party, and Ratsiraka became its secretary general. In sharp contrast to the single-party states created by other African Marxist leaders, Arema served as simply one (albeit the most powerful) member of a coalition of six parties united under the umbrella of the National Front for the Defense of the Revolution (Front National pour la Défense de la Révolution—FNDR). Membership in the FNDR, necessary for participation in the electoral process, was preconditioned on party endorsement of the revolutionary principles and programs contained in the Red Book.

Ratsiraka and Arema clearly dominated the political system. In the *fokonolona* elections held in March 1977, for example, Arema captured 90 percent of 73,000 contested seats in 11,400 assemblies. In June 1977, Arema won 220 out of a total of 232 seats in elections for six provincial general assemblies, and 112 out of a total of 137 seats in the Popular National Assembly. This trend toward consolidation was most vividly demonstrated by Rasiraka's announcement of his 1977 cabinet in which Arema members held sixteen of eighteen ministerial posts.

Yet, less than three years after taking power, Ratsiraka's regime was confronted with growing popular disenchantment.

As early as September 1977, antigovernment demonstrations erupted in Antananarivo because of severe shortages in foodstuffs and essential commodities. This trend intensified as the economy worsened under the weight of ill-conceived economic policies that gradually centralized government control over the key sectors of the economy, including banking and agriculture. Ratsiraka defiantly adopted authoritarian tactics in response to the evolving opposition, sending in the armed forces to stifle dissent and maintain order during student riots in May 1978. In the economic realm, however, Ratsiraka accepted the free-market reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary) in order to ensure an infusion of foreign assistance vital to keeping the economy functioning. Whereas Ratsiraka's drift toward authoritarianism provided his enemies with political cannon fodder, his economic reforms led them to charge him with abandoning "scientific socialism" and alienated his traditional base of political supporters, as well.

The results of presidential elections within the de facto single-party framework that prevailed throughout the Second Republic clearly demonstrated Ratsiraka's declining political fortunes. Widespread initial enthusiasm for his socialist revolution from above secured him nearly 95 percent of the popular vote in the 1975 presidential elections, but support declined to 80 percent in 1982 and to only 63 percent in 1989. The year of 1989 marked a special turning point in that the fall of the Berlin Wall heralded the intellectual death of single-party rule in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and similarly transformed electoral politics in Africa. In the case of Madagascar, increasingly vocal opposition parties denounced what they and international observers considered massive fraud in the 1989 presidential election, including Ratsiraka's refusal to update outdated voting lists that excluded the anti-Ratsiraka youth vote and the stuffing of ballot boxes at unmonitored rural polling stations. Massive demonstrations against Ratsiraka's inauguration led to violent clashes in Antananarivo that, according to official figures, left seventy-five dead and wounded.

Popular discontent with the Ratsiraka regime heightened on August 10, 1991, when more than 400,000 citizens marched peacefully on the President's Palace in order to oust the Ratsiraka government and create a new multiparty political system. Ratsiraka already faced an economy crippled by a general

strike that had begun in May, as well as a divided and restless military whose loyalty no longer could be assumed. When the Presidential Guard opened fire on the marchers and killed and wounded hundreds, a crisis of leadership occurred.

The net result of these events was Ratsiraka's agreement on October 31, 1991, to support a process of democratic transition, complete with the formulation of a new constitution and the holding of free and fair multiparty elections. Albert Zafy, the central leader of the opposition forces and a *côtier* of the Tsimihety ethnic group, played a critical role in this transition process and ultimately emerged as the first president of Madagascar's Third Republic. The leader of the Comité des Forces Vives (Vital Forces Committee, known as Forces Vives), an umbrella opposition group composed of sixteen political parties that spearheaded the 1991 demonstrations, Zafy also emerged as the head of what became known as the High State Authority, a transitional government that shared power with the Ratsiraka regime during the democratization process.

A new draft constitution was approved by 75 percent of those voting in a national referendum on August 19, 1992. The first round of presidential elections followed on November 25. Frontrunner Zafy won 46 percent of the popular vote as the Forces Vives candidate, and Ratsiraka, as leader of his own newly created progovernment front, the Militant Movement for Malagasy Socialism (Mouvement Militant pour le Socialisme Malgache—MMSM), won approximately 29 percent of the vote. The remaining votes were split among a variety of other candidates. Because neither candidate obtained a majority of the votes cast, a second round of elections between the two frontrunners was held on February 10, 1993. Zafy emerged victorious with nearly 67 percent of the popular vote.

The Third Republic, 1993–

The Third Republic officially was inaugurated on March 27, 1993, when Zafy was sworn in as president. The victory of the Forces Vives was further consolidated in elections held on June 13, 1993, for 138 seats in the newly created National Assembly. Voters turned out in low numbers (roughly 30 to 40 percent abstained) because they were being called upon to vote for the fourth time in less than a year. The Forces Vives and other allied parties won seventy-five seats. This coalition gave Zafy a clear majority and enabled him to chose Francisque Ravony of the Forces Vives as prime minister.

By the latter half of 1994, the heady optimism that accompanied this dramatic transition process had declined somewhat as the newly elected democratic government found itself confronted with numerous economic and political obstacles. Adding to these woes was the relatively minor but nonetheless embarrassing political problem of Ratsiraka's refusal to vacate the President's Palace. The Zafy regime has found itself under increasing economic pressure from the IMF and foreign donors to implement market reforms, such as cutting budget deficits and a bloated civil service, that do little to respond to the economic problems facing the majority of Madagascar's population. Zafy also confronts growing divisions within his ruling coalition, as well as opposition groups commonly referred to as "federalists" seeking greater power for the provinces (known as *faritany*) under a more decentralized government (see fig. 2). Although recently spurred by the desire of anti-Zafy forces to gain greater control over local affairs, historically Madagascar has witnessed a tension between domination by the central highlanders and pressures from residents of outlying areas to manage their own affairs. In short, the Zafy regime faces the dilemma of using relatively untested political structures and "rules of the game" to resolve numerous issues of governance.

Physical Environment

Topography

Madagascar can be divided into five geographical regions: the east coast, the Tsaratanana Massif, the central highlands, the west coast, and the southwest. The highest elevations parallel the east coast, whereas the land slopes more gradually to the west coast (see fig. 3).

The east coast consists of a narrow band of lowlands, about fifty kilometers wide, formed from the sedimentation of alluvial soils, and an intermediate zone, composed of steep bluffs alternating with ravines bordering an escarpment of about 500 meters in elevation, which gives access to the central highlands. The coastal region extends roughly from north of Baie d'Antongil, the most prominent feature on the east coast of the island formed by the Masoala Peninsula, to the far south of the island. The coastline is straight, with the exception of the bay, offering less in the way of natural harbors than the west coast. The Canal des Pangalanes (Lakandranon' Ampalangalana), an

800-kilometer-long lagoon formed naturally by the washing of sand up on the island by the Indian Ocean currents and by the silting of rivers, is a feature of the coast; it has been used both as a means of transportation up and down the coast and as a fishing area. The beach slopes steeply into deep water. The east coast is considered dangerous for swimmers and sailors because of the large number of sharks that frequent the shoreline.

The Tsaratanana Massif region at the north end of the island contains, at 2,880 meters, the highest point on the island and, north of this, the Montagne d'Ambre (Ambohitra), which is of volcanic origin. The coastline is deeply indented; two prominent features are the excellent natural harbor at Antsiranana (Diégo Suarez), just south of the Cap d'Ambre (Tanjon' i Bobaomby), and the large island of Nosy-Be to the west. The mountainous topography to the south, however, limits the potential of the port at Antsiranana by impeding the flow of traffic from other parts of the island.

The central highlands, which range from 800 to 1,800 meters in altitude, contain a wide variety of topographies: rounded and eroded hills, massive granite outcroppings, extinct volcanoes, eroded peneplains, and alluvial plains and marshes, which have been converted into irrigated rice fields. The central highlands extend from the Tsaratanana Massif in the north to the Ivakoany Massif in the south. They are defined rather clearly by the escarpments along the east coast, and they slope gently to the west coast. The central highlands include the Anjafy High Plateaux; the volcanic formations of Itasy (Lake Itasy itself is found in a volcanic crater) and the Ankaratra Massif, reaching a height of 2,666 meters; and the Ivakoany Massif in the south. The Isalo Roiniforme Massif lies between the central highlands and the west coast. Antananarivo, the national capital, is located in the northern portion of the central highlands at 1,468 meters above sea level. A prominent feature of the central highlands is a rift valley running north to south, located east of Antananarivo and including Lac Alaotra, the largest body of water on the island, having a length of forty kilometers. The lake is located 761 meters above sea level and is bordered by two cliffs, rising 701 meters to the west and 488 meters to the east, which form the walls of a valley resembling the rift valleys of East Africa. This region has experienced geological subsidence, and earth tremors are frequent here.

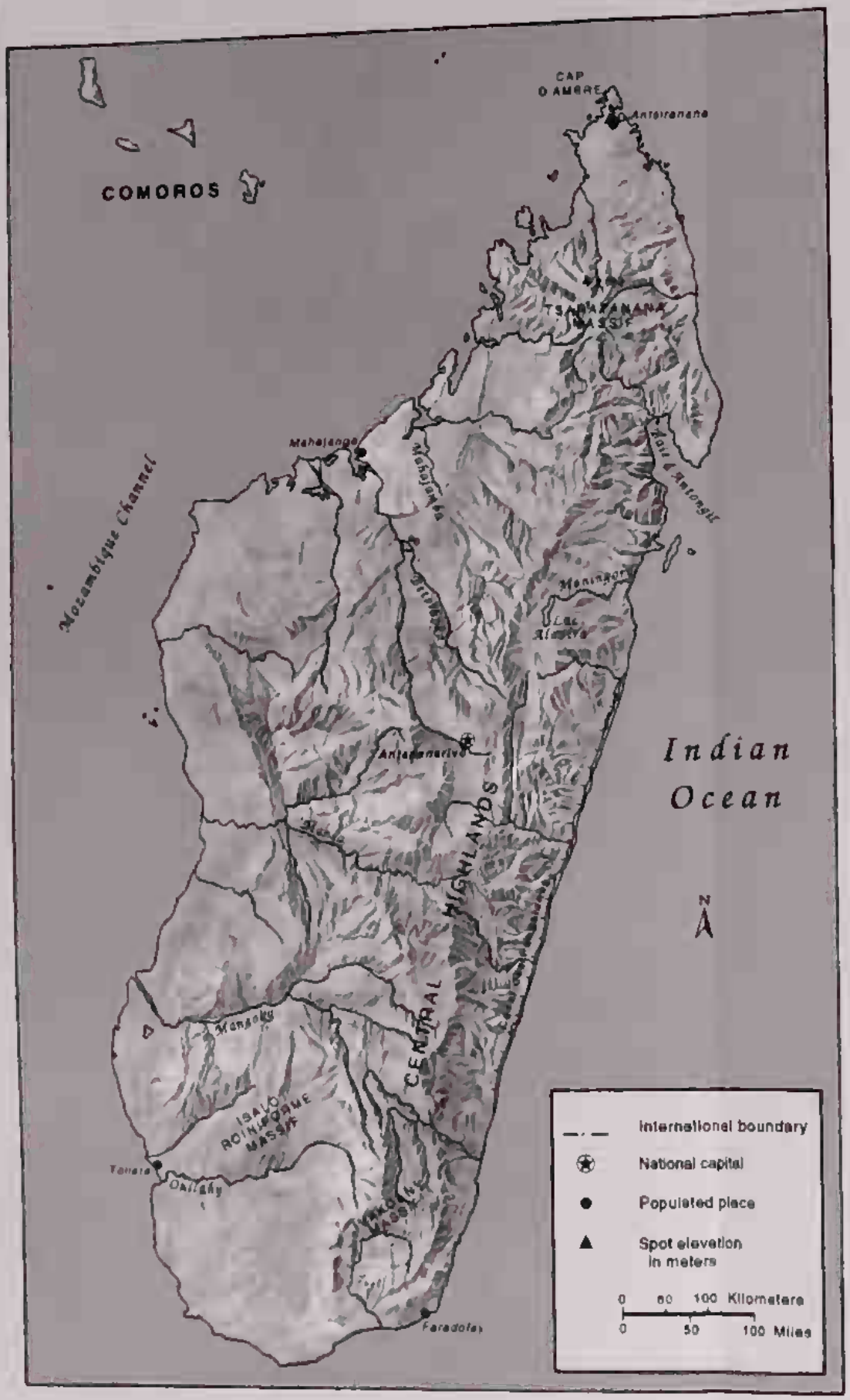


Figure 3. Madagascar: Topography and Drainage

The west coast, composed of sedimentary formations deposited in several layers over time, is more indented than the east coast, especially in the northwest, thus offering a number of fine harbors sheltered from cyclones, such as the harbor at Mahajanga. Deep bays and well-protected harbors have attracted explorers, traders, and pirates from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East since ancient times; thus, the area has served as an important bridge between Madagascar and the outside world. Yet the broad alluvial plains found on the coast between Mahajanga and Toliara, which are believed to have great agricultural potential, are thinly inhabited and remain largely unexploited.

The southwest is bordered on the east by the Ivakoany Massif and on the north by the Isala Roiniforme Massif. It includes two regions along the south coast, the Mahafaly Plateau and the desert region occupied by the Antandroy people.

The Mananara and Mangoro rivers flow from the central highlands to the east coast, as does the Maningory, which flows from Lake Alaotra. Other rivers flowing east into the Indian Ocean include the Bemarivo, the Ivondro, and the Mananjary. These rivers tend to be short because the watershed is located close to the east coast. Owing to the steep elevations, they flow rapidly, often over spectacular waterfalls. The rivers flowing to the west coast and emptying into the Mozambique Channel tend to be longer and slower, because of the more gradual slope of the land. The major rivers on the west coast are the Sambirano, the Mahajamba, the Betsiboka (the port of Mahajanga is located at the mouth), the Mania, the North and South Mahavavy, the Mangoky, and the Onilahy. The Ikopa, which flows past Antananarivo, is a tributary of the Betsiboka. The Mangoky River has a basin area of some 50,000 square kilometers; the Ikopa River and the Betsiboka River have basin areas of 18,550 and 11,800 square kilometers, respectively. The principal river in the south, the Mandrare, has a basin area of some 12,435 square kilometers, but it runs dry during certain months in this desert region. Important lakes, aside from Alaotra, include Lake Kinkony in the northwest and Lake Ihotry in the southwest.

Madagascar has been called the "Great Red Island" because of the supposed preponderance of red lateritic soils. The red soils predominate in the central highlands, although there are much richer soils in the regions of former volcanic activity—Itasy and Ankaratra, and Tsaratanana to the north. A narrow

band of alluvial soils is found all along the east coast and at the mouths of the major rivers on the west coast; clay, sand, and limestone mixtures are found in the west; and shallow or skeletal laterite and limestone are located in the south.

Climate

The climate is dominated by the southeastern trade winds that originate in the Indian Ocean anticyclone, a center of high atmospheric pressure that seasonally changes its position over the ocean. Madagascar has two seasons: a hot, rainy season from November to April; and a cooler, dry season from May to October. There is, however, great variation in climate owing to elevation and position relative to dominant winds. The east coast has a subequatorial climate and, being most directly exposed to the trade winds, has the heaviest rainfall, averaging as much as 3.5 meters annually. This region is notorious not only for a hot, humid climate in which tropical fevers are endemic but also for the destructive cyclones that occur during the rainy season, coming in principally from the direction of the Mascarene Islands. Because rain clouds discharge much of their moisture east of the highest elevations on the island, the central highlands are appreciably drier and, owing to the altitude, also cooler. Thunderstorms are common during the rainy season in the central highlands, and lightning is a serious hazard.

Antananarivo receives practically all of its average annual 1.4 meters of rainfall between November and April. The dry season is pleasant and sunny, although somewhat chilly, especially in the mornings. Although frosts are rare in Antananarivo, they are common at higher elevations. During this time, the blue skies of the central highlands around Antananarivo are considered by many to be among the clearest and most beautiful in the world.

The west coast is drier than either the east coast or the central highlands because the trade winds lose their humidity by the time they reach this region. The southwest and the extreme south are semidesert; as little as one-third of a meter of rain falls annually at Toliara. Overall, surface water is most abundant along the east coast and in the far north (with the exception of the area around Cap d'Ambre, which has relatively little surface water). Amounts diminish to the west and south, and the driest regions are in the extreme south.

Madagascar suffers the impact of cyclones from time to time. From February 2–4, 1994, Madagascar was struck by Cyclone Geralda, the worst cyclone to come ashore on the island since 1927. The cyclone killed seventy people and destroyed enough property to leave approximately 500,000 homeless, including 30,000 in Antananarivo and 80,000 in Toamasina. The cyclone also significantly damaged the country's infrastructure, most notably coastal roads, railroads, and telecommunications, as well as agriculture. Damage has been estimated at US$45 million, and the World Bank's (see Glossary) International Development Association and various European organizations are engaged in financing the reconstruction. The Madagascar government will contribute US$6 million toward the infrastructure rehabilitation.

Flora and Fauna

The island of Madagascar has been described as an "alternate world" or a "world apart" because of the uniqueness and rarity of many of its plant and animal species. Their characteristics are believed to reflect the island's origins as a part of Gondwanaland and its many millions of years of virtually total isolation following the breakup of the landmass. Thus, certain plants, including the "traveler's" tree (so called because its trunk holds potable water), are found both in Madagascar and on the South American continent, but not in Africa. Many of the most characteristic African species, particularly such large mammals as the elephant, rhinoceros, giraffe, zebra, and antelope and such beasts of prey as the lion and leopard, do not exist in Madagascar. In addition, the island has been spared the great variety of venomous snakes indigenous to the African continent. Although it is assumed that most life forms on the island had an African (or South American) origin, many millions of years of near-complete isolation have allowed old species—elsewhere extinct—to survive and new species unique to the island to evolve. Thus, a great number of plant, insect, reptile, and fish species are found only in Madagascar, and all indigenous land mammal species—sixty-six in all—are unique to the island.

Madagascar was once covered almost completely by forests, but the practice of burning the woods to clear the land for dry rice cultivation has denuded most of the landscape, especially in the central highlands. Rain forests are concentrated on the steep hillsides along a slender north-south axis bordering the

east coast, from the Tsaratanana Massif in the north to Tôlanaro in the south. Secondary growth, which has replaced the original forest and consists to a large extent of traveler's trees, raffia, and baobabs, is found in many places along the east coast and in the north. The vegetation of the central highlands and the west coast is for the most part savanna or steppe, and coarse prairie grass predominates where erosion has not exposed the orange-red lateritic soil. In the southwest, the vegetation is adapted to desert conditions.

The remaining rain forest contains a great number of unique plant species. The country has some 900 species of orchids. Bananas, mangoes, coconut, vanilla, and other tropical plants grow on the coasts, and the eucalyptus tree, brought from Australia, is widespread.

Wood and charcoal from the forests are used to meet 80 percent of domestic fuel needs. As a result, fuelwood has become scarce. The World Bank in 1990 launched an environmental program that has increased the planting of pine and eucalyptus to satisfy fuel needs.

Society

Population And Ethnicity

Madagascar has experienced steady population growth throughout the twentieth century. Since the first systematic census was undertaken by colonial authorities at the turn of the twentieth century, the population has grown from 2.2 million in 1900 to 7.6 million in 1975 (the last year that a census was undertaken) and to a population estimated by the IMF in mid-1993 at 11.86 million. It is expected that the population will approach 17 million by the end of the twentieth century, underscoring a more than fivefold increase in less than a hundred years. Moreover, the average rate of population growth itself has increased from 2.3 percent in 1975 to 3.1 percent over the 1980 to 1990 decade. This rate has made Madagascar one of the most rapidly growing countries in Africa, with a large youthful population—in 1992 nearly 55 percent of the population was under twenty years of age.

The increase in population is significantly influenced by Madagascar's increasingly healthy and youthful population. As a result of more extensive and accessible health care services, for example, Madagascar has witnessed a 36 percent decline in infant mortality from 177 per 1,000 live births in 1981 to 114

per 1,000 in 1991—the average for sub-Saharan Africa was 103. Moreover, as of 1991 a significant portion of the population (estimates range from 40 to 50 percent) was below fourteen years of age, and population density (per square kilometer) had risen to twenty (from roughly fourteen in 1981).

The urban population percentage has doubled since 1975, rising from 13 percent of the population to 26 percent in 1992. The annual urban population growth rate in the 1980s was 6.4 percent. Figures for Madagascar's foreign population in the early 1990s are lacking, but in 1988, such persons were estimated to include 25,000 Comorans, 18,000 French, 17,000 Indians, and 9,000 Chinese.

A unique blend of African and Asian landscapes and cultures is usually one of the first things recognized by first-time travelers to Madagascar. In the zebu cattle-raising regions of the south and west, for example, the savannas resemble those of East Africa. In the central highlands, however, irrigated and terraced rice fields evoke images of Southeast Asia. These contrasting images lie at the heart of an ongoing debate over the origins of the Malagasy people.

According to one theory, peoples from the Indonesian archipelago migrated along the coast of south Asia, across the Arabian Peninsula into the east coast of Africa and, finally, across the Mozambique Channel into present-day Madagascar. This movement occurred over several generations and, because of the gradual interaction between Asian and African populations, led to the arrival and eventual implantation of a distinct Malagasy people and culture. A second theory emphasizes the diversity of the peoples inhabiting Madagascar. Simply put, proponents argue that the Malagasy resulted from a series of migrations by different peoples over time. According to this theory, migrants from the Indonesian archipelago arrived first and eventually settled in the central highlands, followed by the arrival of African peoples as a result of normal migrational trends and the rise of the slave trade. Recent scholarship has suggested that perhaps the theories are complementary, with greater emphasis being placed on the first.

Scholars traditionally have described Madagascar as being divided into eighteen or twenty ethnic groups, each with its own distinct territory; political developments in the contemporary period are often described in terms of ethnic conflict. Yet ethnicity is potentially misleading in the Malagasy context because it connotes a more or less self-sufficient and unique

cultural, socioeconomic, and historically united group that perceives itself as being different from other groups.

The population of Madagascar, however, is remarkably homogeneous in terms of language. Unlike most African countries, the vast majority speak the indigenous national Malagasy language. Moreover, despite significant variations, important cultural elements unify the Malagasy people and give them a "pan-islandic" identity. These include a system of kinship in which descent can be traced through either the paternal or the maternal line. The same kinship terms are used by all Malagasy. A second important element is the centrality of respect for the dead (*razana*) to the social, moral, and religious life of the people. Tombs and the ceremonies related to them are prominent features of both the Malagasy landscape and the way of life of the people. A third important feature is the division of Malagasy societies into three relatively rigid strata: nobles, commoners, and slaves (or descendants of slaves). Other common elements include the circumcision of children, the practice of astrology and divination, and certain concepts associated with authority, such as *hasina* (sacred, or life-giving, power), which legitimate the position of political and familial authorities.

Another potentially valuable method of analyzing Malagasy society is to differentiate between the so-called *côtiers*, or peoples living in coastal areas, and those who live in the central highlands. Indeed, scholars have noted in recent years that the salience of ethnic group identity has declined, while the division between the central highlands peoples and the *côtiers* continues to be of great importance in understanding social and political competition. Although many observers equate the term central highlander with the Merina ethnic group (once again suggesting the importance of ethnicity), it is important to note that the Betsileo people also live within this region, and the Merina themselves have settled in other regions of the country. Equally important, many *côtiers* do not live anywhere near the coast. In this sense, the central highlands/*côtier* split is best understood as the historical outcome of the domination of the Merina empire, the original center of which was Imerina (around the city of Antananarivo) and was located in the central highlands.

A true understanding of the character of Madagascar's population and historical development requires an appreciation of the inhabitants' shared characteristics, including language and kinship structure, as well as the central highlands/*côtier* split

Royal tombs of kings and queens of Madagascar on Royal Hill; audience hall in background
Courtesy Brian Kensley

and other divisions based on geographical regions. These latter divisions coincide with the major geographical divisions of the island: east coast, west coast, central highlands, southwest, and the Tsaratanana Massif. Within these regions, the people have certain cultural similarities accentuated by the natural environment.

Peoples of the East Coast

The Betsimisaraka constitute the second largest (14.9 percent) group of Madagascar's population and clearly are the most numerous on the east coast. They are divided into three subgroups: the northern Betsimisaraka, the Betanimena, and the southern Betsimisaraka. Their territory extends along the coast in a narrow band from the Bemarivo River in the north to the Mananjary River in the south, a distance of some 640 kilo-

meters. The Betsimisaraka, whose name means "numerous and inseparable," have traditionally been traders, seafarers, and fishers, as well as cultivators of the tropical lowland areas. They trace their origins to the confederacy established by Ratsimilaho, allegedly the son of a British pirate and a Malagasy princess, who unified several small coastal states in the eighteenth century. The confederation continued after Ratsimilaho died in 1751, but it was much weakened by internal conflict and external pressure. The Betsimisaraka territory has included the important port city of Toamasina, as well as Fenerive and Maroansetra at the head of the Baie d'Antongil.

South of the Betsimisaraka are ethnic groups who trace their origins to Islamic traders of mixed Arab, African, and Malayo-Indonesian origin who settled on the coasts after the fourteenth century, and are known as Antalaotra ("people of the sea"). The Antambahoaka, whose name is translated as "the people," make up 0.4 percent of the population and live around the Mananjary River just south of the Betsimisaraka territory. They claim as their ancestor Raminia, a king who came from Mecca around the early fourteenth century, and are part of a larger group known as the Zafi-Raminia, or "descendants of Raminia"; some of this group migrated from the Mananjary region to become rulers of peoples to the south. Some scholars have speculated that the Zafi-Raminia may have formed part of the ruling class of the Merina, who came to dominate Madagascar in the nineteenth century. Their power and prestige derived from their willingness to use their knowledge of astrology, medicine, and divination to serve the courts of kings throughout Madagascar.

Another people descended from the Antalaotra, the Antaimoro ("people of the shore") constitute 3.4 percent of the population and also live south of the Betsimisaraka. The Antaimoro were apparently the last significant arrivals, appearing around the end of the fifteenth century, possibly from the Arabian Peninsula with a sojourn in Ethiopia or Somalia, just before the coming of the Europeans in the sixteenth century. They are the only Malagasy people before the nineteenth century to possess a system of writing, based on Arabic script. Their books, the *sorabe* (from the Arabic *sura*, meaning "writing," and the Malagasy *be*, meaning "big" or "great"), which were inscribed in ink on special paper made from beaten wood bark, dealt with astrology, divination, medicine, and historical chronicles. Like the Antambahoaka, the Antaimoro are noted

throughout Madagascar for their knowledge of the supernatural and medicine.

Among a number of other groups around Farafangana, at the southern end of the Canal des Pangalanes, the most important are the Antaifasy ("people of the sands"), who constitute 1.2 percent of the population. To the south, the Antaisaka (5.3 percent of the population) are found in large numbers around the alluvial valley of the Mananara River. The Antanosy ("people of the island"), who live in the extreme southeastern part of the island around Tôlanaro, make up 2.3 percent of the population.

The peoples of the eastern escarpment separating the east coast from the central highlands are the Sihanaka ("people of the lake"), who represent 2.4 percent of the population; the Bezanozano (0.8 percent), living south of the Sihanaka; and the Tanala (3.8 percent). The Sihanaka live around Lake Alaotra and practice wet-rice cultivation in a manner similar to that of the Merina. The Bezanozano ("many little braids," referring to their hair style), the Tanala ("people of the forest"), and the inland Betsimisaraka practice slash-and-burn agriculture in the forests, cultivating dry rice, corn, yams, and other crops. Although the Merina conquered the Sihanaka, the Bezanozano, and the inland Betsimisaraka in the early nineteenth century, the southern Tanala remained independent up to the French occupation.

Peoples of the West Coast

The peoples of the west coast, known as the Sakalava ("people of the long valley"), constitute 6.2 percent of the population. Their large territory of some 128,000 square kilometers extends in a broad band up the coast from the Onilahy River in the south to Nosy-Be in the north. The Sakalava were among the most dynamic and expansionist of the Malagasy peoples from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, when the Merina conquered them. During this period, Sakalava territory was divided into a number of kingdoms ruled by branches of the royal Maroserana clan. In the early eighteenth century, the kings of Menabe in the south and Boina in the north united these divisions into confederations.

The Sakalava, along with the Bara people of the southwest, are considered the most "African" of the Malagasy peoples. Specifically, several elements in Sakalava culture bear a strong resemblance to those of Africa, including the keeping of relics

(such as pieces of bone) considered to have magical powers and the practice of spirit possession, in which a medium transmits the wishes of dead kings to the living. The Sakalava are also a pastoral people, and those who live in the hinterland keep large herds of zebu cattle that outnumber the human population.

The Sakalava are perhaps best known for the seafaring skills they developed throughout history. In the seventeenth century, they were potentially the first to receive firearms from Europeans in exchange for cattle and slaves and, thus, were in a position to force many of the other peoples of the island to pay them tribute. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, large fleets of Sakalava outrigger canoes went on seasonal raids to capture slaves in the Comoro Islands and on the East African coast, causing much devastation. They also sought slaves in the central highlands of Madagascar. Because of the Merina conquest and subsequent French occupation at the end of the century, Sakalava fortunes declined somewhat. They have not increased in number as rapidly as many of the other Malagasy peoples, and their territories, still the largest of all the ethnic groups, have been encroached upon, particularly by the Tsimihety people to the east. A people known as the Makoa, the descendants of slaves brought from Africa by slave raiders, also live along the northwest coast and constitute about 1.1 percent of the population.

Peoples of the Central Highlands

The Merina, whose name means "those from the country where one can see far" (an eloquent yet important reference to their control of the central highlands) are not only the most numerous of the Malagasy peoples, representing more than one-quarter of the total population (26.2 percent), but since the early nineteenth century have been the most organized in terms of social, economic, and political structure. During the nineteenth century, the Merina almost succeeded in unifying the entire island under a centralized administration. Although their influence declined somewhat during the French colonial period, especially after the unsuccessful Revolt of 1947, they are heavily represented among the country's socioeconomic and political elite. Merina territory originally consisted only of the lands encircling the current capital of Antananarivo, but as they expanded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it came to include most of the northern central highlands, now

the province of Antananarivo. Many Merina have settled in other parts of the island as government officials, professionals, and traders, and all the major cities have sizable Merina populations.

The Merina are considered the most "Asian" of the Malagasy ethnic groups in terms of their physical characteristics and culture. Having relatively light complexions and straight black hair, as well as a way of life based on wet-rice cultivation, they are strongly reminiscent of the peoples of Southeast Asia. It has been suggested that the ancestors of the Merina may have preserved their Malayo-Indonesian characteristics through the practice of endogamy or intermarriage. Such a practice would have discouraged their marrying with African peoples even during their hypothesized sojourn on the East African coast, which may have lasted centuries. The plausibility of this thesis is supported by the fact that the Merina continue to practice endogamy, although it is also plausible that Merina ancestors may simply have migrated directly to Madagascar without settling first in Africa. The Merina are sensitive to physical differences and distinguish between people who are *fotsy* (white), with relatively light complexions and descended from the free-born of the nineteenth-century Merina kingdom, and those who are *mainty* (black), descendants of slaves or captives from other parts of the island who are described as being more "African" in physical appearance. *Fotsy* and *mainty* are not always clearly distinguishable, even to the Merina themselves, but this racial distinction nonetheless divides Merina society into two distinct groups and contributes to its highly unequal nature.

The Betsileo, who constitute 12.1 percent of the population and live in the central highlands south of the Merina in a region of about 40,000 square kilometers, have a culture similar to that of their northern neighbors. They are reputedly the best farmers in Madagascar, building rice terraces on the slopes of steep hills similar to those of Indonesia or the Philippines. They were united in the late eighteenth century by King Andriamanalimbetany of Isandra, one of the four Betsileo royal principalities, but were incorporated into the Merina kingdom in 1830. The Betsileo share something of the privileged position of the Merina, constituting a significant portion of Madagascar's official, professional, and skilled artisan classes.

South of the Betsileo live the Bara (3.3 percent of the population), who are divided into five clans in the dry regions at the

southern end of the central highlands. They keep large herds of zebu cattle and are the most pastoral people in Madagascar; they also have a reputation of being valiant warriors.

The Tsimihety (7.3 percent of the population), whose lands are located north of Imerina, illustrate rather strikingly the birth and development of a Malagasy people. Their name, "those who do not cut their hair," refers to the refusal of their forebears in the early eighteenth century to submit to the Sakalava custom of cutting their hair when the king died; rather, they migrated to the unsettled north-central region of the island. The Tsimihety are noted for the rapid expansion of their population and for their penchant for migration, expanding the boundaries of their territory and encroaching on the lands of neighboring peoples. Primarily raisers of cattle, they are divided into a large number of traditional clans with little political organization. They are described as the individualists of the island, desiring to live a life free of government control in the unsettled hinterlands.

Peoples of the Tsaratanana Massif and the Southwest

The Antakarana, living on the Tsaratanana Massif and the northern tip of the island, make up 0.6 percent of the population. The topography of the region isolates them from the other Malagasy peoples. They are both cattle herders and tropical horticulturalists.

The major peoples of the arid southwest region are the Mahafaly and the Antandroy, making up 1.6 and 5.4 percent of the population, respectively. The Mahafaly occupy a region between the Onilahy River to the north and the Menarandra River to the south, encompassing an area of some 45,000 square kilometers. The Antandroy territory lies to the east, a desert area full of cacti and thorn bushes. Its terrain makes their name, translated as "people of the thorns," especially apt. Both peoples depend upon the raising of cattle. Limited cultivation is also practiced. The Antandroy region is especially poor, causing workers to migrate to other parts of the island to make a living. Along with cattle, the prickly pear cactus is vital to the people's livelihood. Its spiny growths have served as a source of water and nourishment and as a means of defense against outside invaders.

Minorities

Madagascar is also inhabited by nonindigenous minorities who constitute roughly 1.7 percent of the population. Because

of the status of France as the former colonial power, Madagascar is home to many former French colonial administrators and military officers. The country is also home to French professionals, businesspersons, managers of large plantations, and colons (small farmers) working their own holdings. Approximately 18,000 French citizens lived and worked in Madagascar in the early 1990s.

The Comorans (currently numbering 25,000) historically have constituted a second important nonindigenous population group, but their numbers decreased after racial riots in Mahajanga in December 1976 resulted in nearly 1,400 killed; in addition, some 20,000 were repatriated to the islands in the ensuing months. They have been concentrated in the northern part of Madagascar, along the coast, and prior to 1976 formed more than one-tenth of the populations of the port cities of Mahajanga and Antsiranana. Most of the Comorans, who adhere to the Muslim faith, have migrated from the island of Njazidja (Grande Comore); they typically work as unskilled laborers in the fields or on the docks of the ports.

Indo-Pakistanis (roughly numbering 17,000) represent a third nonindigenous minority group, and trace their origins to the regions of Gujerat or Bombay on the Indian subcontinent. Like the Comorans, they are for the most part Muslim. Despite living on the island for several generations (or even several centuries), the Indo-Pakistanis still maintain contact with their home areas in northwestern India and Pakistan. Historically, they have worked as merchants and small entrepreneurs and in the past have monopolized the wholesale and retail trade in textiles. They tend to be concentrated in the cities along the west coast.

The Chinese (numbering approximately 9,000) constitute a fourth major nonindigenous population group. Like the Indo-Pakistanis, they are engaged primarily in commerce but are found mostly along the east coast and around Antananarivo. They are more commonly found in the rural areas than the Indo-Pakistanis. They work as small traders and often marry Malagasy.

Language

The Malagasy language—spoken throughout Madagascar by the entire population—is the only one in the African region that belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian language family. Linguists believe that it shares a common origin with, and is most

closely related to Maanyan, a language spoken in southeast Borneo. Both Malagasy and Maanyan bear a close affinity with the languages of the western Indonesian archipelago, such as Malay, Javanese, Balinese, and the Minangkabau language of Sumatra.

The origins of the Malagasy language in southeast Asia are clearly demonstrated by common words and meanings shared with several of the Indonesian languages. For example, the Malagasy term *antalaotra* (people of the sea) echoes the Malay *laut* (sea). Even more geographically widespread and interesting affinities have been discovered. *Vahiny* means "stranger" in Malagasy, while *vahini* means "girl" in Tahitian Polynesian. Scholars suggest that the two words (assuming they share a common origin) reveal that the first Malayo-Indonesian settlers along the African coast, or Madagascar itself, were male and that women came later as guests or strangers to settlements already established.

Although different regional dialects of Malagasy exist, these are mutually intelligible, and the language is a significant basis of cultural unity. Words are formed from roots with basic meanings, which are combined with prefixes or suffixes to create derivatives. Many Malagasy words, particularly names (such as that of the Merina king, Andrianampoinimerina), are very long, but certain syllables, particularly the last, are lightly accented or not at all.

A number of foreign words are found in the Malagasy vocabulary. The names of the days of the week and the months of the year are taken from Arabic, and the names of animals are taken from a Swahili dialect of East Africa. A number of English and French words also entered the language in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Before the nineteenth century, the only Malagasy people with a written language were the Antaimoro, keepers of the *sorabe*. By 1824–25, a written form of Malagasy using Roman characters was developed by members of the London Missionary Society working under the patronage of Merina King Radama I. The result was an almost perfectly consistent phonetic language that continues to be used throughout the country; the consonants are pronounced as in English and the vowels as in French, a compromise apparently promoted by Radama I. The completion of the alphabet enabled the missionaries to publish a Malagasy Bible and other books for their schools, and the

possession of a written language was to prove decisive to the development of the Merina-dominated portion of Madagascar.

The colonial period witnessed the emergence of French as the dominant language of the island, and Malagasy was relegated to an inferior position, particularly in official and academic circles. Although the First Republic adopted an official policy of bilingualism (French and Malagasy), French continued to dominate until the inauguration of Ratsiraka and his promulgation of an official policy of Malagachization. Originally conceived by nationalists as the promotion of education in the national language, Malagachization also ultimately included the more radical denunciation of French culture and influence over the national economy and political system. Malagachization further entailed the creation of a common Malagasy language that partook of dialects from all the regions and peoples of the island rather than being primarily a Merina dialect, as remains the case with official Malagasy today. After 1982 the drive toward Malagachization increasingly faltered in favor of a continuing trend toward reembracing the concept of Madagascar's inclusion in the international francophone community. Indeed, French remains important, largely because of its international status and the fact that most of the leadership has been educated in French. Both Malagasy and French are used in official government publications.

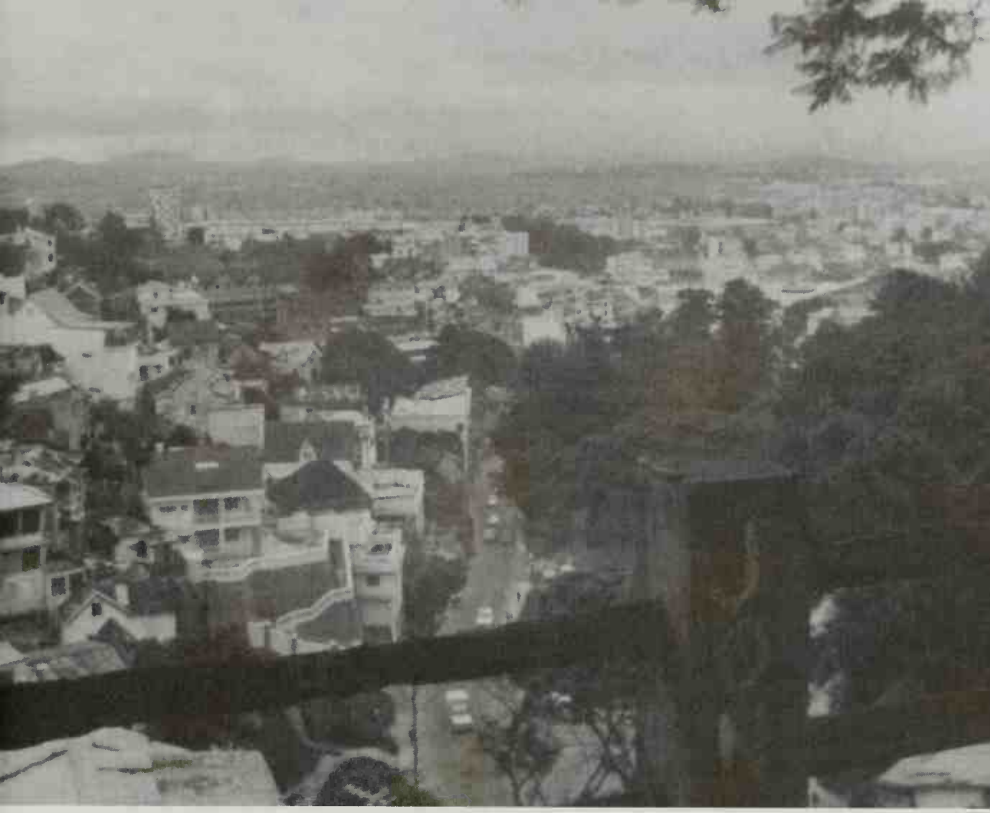
Traditional Beliefs and Religion

A firm belief in the existence of close ties between the living and the dead constitutes the most basic of all traditional beliefs and the foundation for Malagasy religious and social values. All the Malagasy peoples have traditionally accepted the existence of a supreme God, known commonly as Zanahary (Creator) or Andriamanitra (Sweet, or Fragrant, Lord). The dead have been conceived as playing the role of intermediary between this supreme God and humankind and are viewed as having the power to affect the fortunes of the living for good or evil. The dead are sometimes described as "gods on earth," who are considered the most important and authoritative members of the family, intimately involved in the daily life of the living members. At the same time, the *razana* (best defined as "ancestors") are the sources from which the life force flows and the creators of Malagasy customs and ways of life.The living are merely temporary extensions of the dead. Great hardship or trouble can result if the dead are offended or neglected.

The burial tomb, a prominent part of the island landscape in all regions, is the primary link between the living and the dead among the Malagasy. It is built with great care and expense, reflecting the privileged position of the dead, and is often more costly and substantial than the houses of the living. The land upon which a family tomb is situated—*tanindrazana* (land of the ancestors)—is inalienable, and social and economic practices are designed to guarantee that tomb lands are kept within the family. Anthropologists have described the Merina as living, in effect, in two localities: the place where one happens to work and keep one's household, and the *tanindrazana*, a locality of much deeper sentimental significance, the spiritual center where the family tomb is located. The two are usually separated by a considerable distance. Among some groups, whether one decides to be buried in the tombs of the father's or mother's family determines individual descent-group allegiance.

The tombs of the various peoples around the island differ somewhat in form. Merina tombs tend to be solid, stone structures, built partially underground, with a chamber in which the bodies of ancestors are kept on shelves, wrapped in silk shrouds. The traditional tombs of the Mahafaly in the southwest were built of stone but surmounted by intricately carved wooden posts depicting human and animal figures. More recent Mahafaly tombs, particularly those built by rich families, are often made of concrete, with glass windows, brightly painted designs and often remarkable depictions of airplanes, taxicabs, or other modern paraphernalia mounted on the roof. At one time, it was the custom of the Sakalava people living around the Morondava River on the west coast to decorate their tombs with carvings showing explicit sexual activity. These were meant to illustrate the life-giving force, or fertility, of the ancestors.

Among the Merina and Betsileo peoples of the central highlands, the custom of *famadihana* ("placing" or the "turning" of the dead) reaffirms the link between the living and the dead. This occurs when a person is taken from a temporary to a permanent tomb in the *tanindrazana*, and the remains are taken out of the tomb to be wrapped in new shrouds, or when a body is moved from one tomb to another. These ceremonies are costly, mainly because of the expense of providing food for a large number of relatives and guests. They represent for the peoples of the central highlands a time of communion with the



Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo
Courtesy J.D. von Pischke

razana and a means of avoiding or reducing guilt or blame. It is considered a serious transgression not to hold a *famadihana* when one is financially able to do so. The ceremony is presided over by an astrologer, but the chief participants are the close relatives of those persons whose remains are being moved or rewrapped. In this regard, the *famadihana* resembles in spirit a family reunion or the more austere ancestral ceremonies of China and Korea, where the spirits of ancestors are invited to a feast given by members of a family or lineage, rather than the funerals of the West, which are "final endings."

Although the *famadihana* does not occur outside the central highlands and the attitudes of the Merina and Betsileo toward the dead differ in certain significant respects, the idea of the dead as beings to be respected is universal in Madagascar. A number of different "souls" are recognized by the Malagasy. Among the Merina, these include the *fanahy*, a kind of essence

which determines individual character and behavior; thus, an individual can have a good or a bad *fanahy*. Another is the soul of the person after death, the *ambiroa*, which is called to the tomb for the celebration of the *famadihana*, but which, over time, is believed to blend with the collective spirit of other ancestors. The *ambiroa* is believed to permeate the tomb building, the family household, and the hills and valleys of the *tanindrazana*, being in a sense omnipresent. Other concepts include the soul of a recently deceased person, the *lolo*, which is said to be harmless but feels homesick for its old surroundings and often appears in the form of a moth or a butterfly. The *angatra*, ghosts of the unknown dead, are often malevolent and frighten people at night. The emphases in the minds of the people, however, are not on the afterlife or on the experiences of the dead souls either as ghosts or in heaven or hell, but on the relationship of the dead with the living and the role of the former as bearers of power and authority.

The *ombiasy* and the *mpanandro* combine the functions of diviners, traditional healers, and astrologers. They originated among the Antaimoro and the Antambahoaka of the southwest coast, who were influenced by the Antalaotra. Among the Antandroy, it is the *ombiasy* who are often asked to eradicate a mistake made by neglecting a taboo. The Bara consult the *ombiasy* to look after the sick and dying. Family heads ask them when to begin certain agricultural tasks or when to marry or circumcise those entering adulthood. Merina families have their personal diviners who consult the stars; their advice is requested on all enterprises that are thought to involve dangers. They are paid a regular salary and additional fees for extra services. They set the auspicious day for a *famadihana*. Even a highly educated Merina would not think of building a house without consulting the *ombiasy* or the *mpanandro* for the favorable day to begin work. When a marriage is contemplated, both sets of parents will ask the *ombiasy* and the *mpanandro* whether the partners will be compatible.

The science of the *ombiasy* and the *mpanandro* is tied to the concept of *vintana*, which means fate ordained by the position of moon, sun, and stars. Accordingly, different values and different forces, either active or passive, are attributed to each fraction of time. Space, too, is thought to be affected by these forces, east being superior to west, and north being superior to south. Northeast therefore is believed to be the most favorable direction. People build their houses on the north-south axis

and reserve the northeastern corner for prayers. Guests are seated on the northern side, and chickens are kept in the southwestern corner.

Fate is impersonal and cannot be changed, but certain aspects can be foretold and avoided. For divination the *ombiasy* use a system of Arabic origin in which fruit seeds or grains of corn are put into rows of eight. Various figure combinations indicate the future and what to do regarding sickness, love, business, and other enterprises. The *ombiasy* also sell talismans made of such objects as dried or powdered vegetables, glass beads, or animal teeth.

Fady are taboos on the use of certain substances, particularly foods, or on the performance, including the timing, of certain acts. They continue to regulate much of Malagasy life. Many are connected with *vintana*, while others express certain social values. For example, to deny hospitality to a stranger is *fady*, as is the act of refusing this hospitality. The concept of *fady* often also expresses a well-developed metaphorical sense. According to one *fady*, it is wrong to sit in the doorway of a house while the rice is sprouting, since the door of the house is compared to the "gateway" of birth and by blocking it, one might impede the "birth" of the rice. It is important to remember, however, that *fady*, particularly dietary prohibitions, vary widely among different ethnic groups, and from village to village within the same ethnic group. To be at home in a different locality, travelers must acquaint themselves with a large number of local variations.

Traditional beliefs are augmented by imported organized religions. Although exact figures on religious affiliations do not exist, it is estimated that approximately 55 percent of the total population adhere to traditional beliefs, and 40 percent are Christian, about evenly divided between Roman Catholics and Protestants, the remaining 5 percent being Muslim. Indeed, Protestant and Roman Catholic churches have found themselves competing for new adherents, most notably underscored by the fact that villages in the central highlands often have two churches, one Protestant and one Roman Catholic, that face each other at opposite ends of the village. The Roman Catholic church enjoys its largest support among the Betsileo people in the southern portion of the central highlands, and is also associated with former slaves and the *côtiers*. Protestantism enjoys its largest support among the Merina of the central highlands and, therefore, historically has been perceived as the

Christian affiliation of the upper classes. Despite the minority status of Christians, the Council of Christian Churches in Madagascar played a major role in arbitrating a resolution to the conflict resulting from the violence and general strikes in May and August 1991 (see The Second Republic, 1975–92, this ch.).

The nineteenth century witnessed a confrontation between Christianity and traditional religious beliefs, as Queen Ranavalona I expelled foreign missionaries and persecuted Christians, putting many of them to death. The tide reversed at her death, and at the beginning of the reign of Ranavalona II, the old *sampy*—idols or talismans endowed with supernatural powers to protect the kingdom—were destroyed, and Protestantism became the religion of the royal family. Yet opposition has given way in many cases to a kind of mutual assimilation. Christian missionaries were able to build on the Malagasy concept of a supreme God by using the term, "Andriamanitra," to refer to the biblical God and by choosing one of the traditional terms for soul, *fanahy*, to define its Christian counterpart. Although the supremacy of Christianity in the central highlands led to the demise of idol worship, Malagasy pastors have not challenged the strength of traditional beliefs in the power and authority of the *razana*. Christians have their dead blessed at a church before burying them according to the old ceremonies, and may invite the pastor to attend a *famadihana* and place a cross on top of the tomb. Christian belief in the power of a transcendent and somewhat distant God has blended with older beliefs in the closeness and intimacy of the dead as spiritual beings. Some Malagasy Christians will even say that the dead have become Christians themselves and continue to be the arbiters of right and wrong.

Exact figures are not available, but followers of the Sunni (see Glossary) and Shia (see Glossary) variants of Islam together constitute around 5 percent of the total population. Most are Comorans or Indo-Pakistanis; a small number are converted Malagasy. The majority are located in Mahajanga Province. A small minority of the Indian community practices Hinduism.

Social Structure and Family

Traditional society is hierarchical in structure. Kinship groups are ranked precisely along a superior/inferior continuum, and individuals within these groups are ranked according

to age, descent, and gender. This pervasive ranking reflects the perceived power of ancestors as the source of *hasina* (life-giving power), which is distributed unequally among individuals and family groups. Royal or noble persons are supposed to possess a greater amount of *hasina* than others, so that their descendants enjoy superior social status. Within families of any rank, elders possess greater *hasina* than the young, not only by virtue of their maturity and experience but also because they are perceived as closer to the dead and thus share in part of their power. Rulers do not rule alone but share their offices in effect with their ancestors, who are, in fact, more powerful and influential than the rulers themselves. Among the Sakalava, it is believed that the soul or spirit of a royal ancestor can take possession of a person in order to make known its commands to the living.

Social values are highly conservative, demonstrating an awareness of hierarchy and place that permeates the daily life of the people. Observers have noted, for example, that in Merina households each member of the family is expected to eat a meal in turn according to age; the youngest is served last. Family members are seated around the table in an arrangement that reflects age-rank, the father or grandfather occupying the "noble corner" (the northeast). Failure to honor the rank is considered a serious violation of *fady*. Children who eat before their elders can be severely punished. Within the village, the local notables and respected elders of kin groups, who are usually male, have preponderant influence in village affairs.

The society as a whole remains divided into a number of unequal social groups based entirely on descent. Among the Merina, Madagascar's dominant ethnic group, these are referred to as the *andriana* (nobles), the *hova* (commoners), and the *andevo* (slaves or, more properly, the descendants of slaves). The distinction between *andriana* and *hova* on the one hand and *andevo* on the other hand corresponds to the distinction between "whites" and "blacks" in Merina society. Among the Sakalava, royal clans descended from the Maroserana occupy the highest social position, followed by noble and commoner clans; the descendants of slaves again occupy the lowest status. Noble and commoner clans possess histories that define their relations to the king and their different social roles. The social hierarchy of the Malagasy people, however, is actually far more differentiated than this system might suggest, because

within each "caste" constituent clans or kin groups are also arranged in a precise hierarchy of superior and inferior that is well known to all individuals.

Among the Merina, the Malagasy people most thoroughly studied by anthropologists, the population is divided into a number of *karazana* (large kin groups) that are defined in terms of the common land upon which the family tomb is located. They are hierarchically ranked and usually named after a single ancestor. Members of the same *karazana* are described as being "of one womb." The general practice is for individuals to marry within the *karazana* or even within the same subunit to which they belong. Although endogamy carries with it the taint of incest, intermarriage is preferred because, in this way, land (especially tomb land) can be kept within the kin unit rather than being inherited by outsiders. Preserving the boundaries of the kinship unit through intermarriage preserves the integrity of the all-important link between the living and the dead.

Below the level of the *karazana*, the Merina are divided into *fianakaviana* (family), which includes close relatives by blood and affiliation. The family is less defined by territory than by its role as the locus of feelings of loyalty and affection. Members of the same *fianakaviana* are *havana* (relatives) but with a strong emotional connotation. The ideal of *fihavanana* (amity, solidarity) is that *havana* should love and trust one another, rendering mutual aid and sharing each other's possessions. When a man moves to new lands, his relatives will often come after him to claim parcels of land to cultivate. Persons who are not *havana* are often considered untrustworthy. However, fictive kinship, described as "those who are kin because they are loved," is a widespread Malagasy institution drawing individuals into an intermediate status between strangers and kin. This system can be very useful in daily life, particularly outside the *tanindrazana*.

Descent among the Merina is neither strictly patrilineal nor matrilineal. Instead, the practice of endogamy enables the two families involved in a marriage to define the situation as one in which they each receive a new child. The husband and wife are equally deferential to both sets of in-laws. Although women have occupied social roles inferior to those of men in traditional society, they are not completely subject to the will of their husbands or parents-in-law, as has been the case in strictly patrilineal societies.

There is some choice of which tomb group an individual will join and, thus, in which tomb he or she will be buried. Tomb groups consist of closely related *fianakaviana* members who own and maintain a tomb in common. The heads of tomb groups are local notables or government officials, and each member contributes to the tomb's upkeep, often a heavy financial burden because the tomb buildings are large and in frequent need of repair. New tombs are built, and new tomb groups are formed with the passing of generations. Both social identity and relationship with the dead are determined by one's tomb group. The most unfortunate persons are those who, because they are strangers or because of some other disqualification, cannot be interred within a tomb.

The difference between former free persons and former slaves remains particularly significant, despite the formal abolition of slavery by the French in 1897. Persons of slave origin are generally poorer than other Merina and are expected to perform the most menial tasks and to be particularly deferential to others. One observer noticed among the Betsileo in a rural household that during a meal to which a number of men had been invited, two persons of slave origin had to use a common plate, while free persons had their own plates. Former slaves are also often stereotypically described as rude, uncultured, and ugly. Marriages between persons of slave origin and other Merina are rare. When they do occur, the offspring are considered part of the slave group and are denied a place in the tomb of the free parent's family. In fact, the parent of the offspring may also be denied entrance. Former slaves do not possess links to a *tanindrazana* and, thus, are apt to be more mobile than the descendants of free persons, because migration offers the possibility of escaping from the stigma of slave descent. It is estimated that as much as 50 percent of the population of Imerina is of slave origin, whereas the percentage for the Betsileo territory is much lower.

Although the Merina social and kinship pattern is to a great degree common to all the peoples of Madagascar, there are important variations based in part on different histories and on ecological variations between the rice-growing and pastoral regions of the country. The pastoral Bara and the Tsimihety, who are agriculturalists but place great cultural and sentimental significance on herds of zebu, base descent and inheritance on patrilineality more strictly than the Merina.

Education

In traditional Madagascar, education was not seen as separate from the other spheres of life. It emphasized the importance of maintaining one's place in a hierarchical society, trained people in the proper observance of ritual and innumerable *fady* prohibitions, and, above all, taught respect for ancestors. Formal education in the modern sense first appeared when the missionary David Jones of the London Missionary Society established a school in Antananarivo in 1820. It was sponsored by King Radama I, and Jones's first students were children of the royal family. Literacy spread as a result of the schools the Imerina missionaries built; in 1835 an estimated 15,000 persons knew how to read and write the new Malagasy language. Despite significant retrenchment during the reign of Queen Ranavalona I, the missionary school system, including both Protestant and Roman Catholic institutions, continued to grow.

During the colonial period, the French established a system of public schools that was divided into two parts: elite schools, modeled after those of France and reserved for the children of French citizens (a status few Malagasy enjoyed); and indigenous schools for the Malagasy, which offered practical and vocational education but were not designed to train students for positions of leadership or responsibility. Middle-grade Malagasy civil servants and functionaries were trained at the *écoles régionales* (regional schools), the most important of which was the École le Myre de Villers in Antananarivo. Reforms of the public school system designed to give the Malagasy more educational opportunities were initiated after World War II. At independence in 1960, the country had a system of education almost identical to that of France.

Education is compulsory for children between the ages of six and fourteen. The current education system provides primary schooling for five years, from ages six to eleven. Secondary education lasts for seven years and is divided into two parts: a junior secondary level of four years from ages twelve to fifteen, and a senior secondary level of three years from ages sixteen to eighteen. At the end of the junior level, graduates receive a certificate, and at the end of the senior level, graduates receive the *baccalauréat* (the equivalent of a high-school diploma). A vocational secondary school system, the *collège professionnel* (professional college), is the equivalent of the junior secondary level; the *collège technique* (technical college), which

awards the *baccalauréat technique* (technical diploma), is the equivalent of the senior level.

The University of Madagascar, established as an Institute for Advanced Studies in 1955 in Antananarivo and renamed in 1961, is the main institute of higher education. It maintains six separate, independent branches in Antananarivo, Antsiranana, Fianarantsoa, Toamasina, Toliara, and Mahajanga. (Prior to 1988, the latter five institutions were provincial extensions of the main university in Antananarivo.) The university system consists of several faculties, including law and economics, sciences, and letters and human sciences, and numerous schools that specialize in public administration, management, medicine, social welfare, public works, and agronomy. Official reports have criticized the excessive number of students at the six universities: a total of 40,000 in 1994, whereas the collective capacity is 26,000. Reform measures are underway to improve the success rate of students—only 10 percent complete their programs, and the average number of years required to obtain a given degree is eight to ten compared with five years for African countries. The *baccalauréat* is required for admission to the university. Madagascar also has teacher-training colleges.

The gradual expansion of educational opportunities has had an impressive impact on Malagasy society, most notably in raising the literacy level of the general population. Only 39 percent of the population could be considered literate in 1966, but the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that this number had risen to 50 percent at the beginning of the 1980s and to 80 percent in 1991. Similarly, primary school enrollment is nearly universal, a significant increase from the lower figure of 65 percent enrollment in 1965 (Madagascar had 13,000 public primary schools in 1994); 36 percent of the relevant school-age population attends secondary school (there were 700 general education secondary schools and eighty *lycées* or classical secondary institutions); and 5 percent of the relevant school-age population attends institutions of higher learning. Despite these statistics, a 1993 UNICEF report considers the education system a "failure," pointing out that in contrast to the early 1980s when education represented approximately 33 percent of the national budget, in 1993 education constituted less than 20 percent of the budget, and 95 percent of this amount was devoted to salaries. The average number of years required for a student to complete primary

school is twelve. Girls have equal access with boys to educational institutions.

The national education system often has been at the center of political debate. As is the case throughout Africa, educational credentials provide one of the few opportunities to obtain employment in a country with a limited private sector, and the distribution of educational resources has continued to be an issue with explosive political ramifications.

Historically, the system has been characterized by an unequal distribution of education resources among the different regions of the country. Because the central highlands had a long history of formal education beginning in the early nineteenth century, this region had more schools and higher educational standards than the coastal regions. The disparity continued to be a major divisive factor in national life in the years following independence. The Merina and the Betsileo peoples, having better access to schools, inevitably tended to be overrepresented in administration and the professions, both under French colonialism and after independence in 1960.

Adding to these geographical inequities is the continued lack of educational opportunities for the poorest sectors of society. For example, the riots that led to the fall of the Tsiranana regime in 1972 were initiated by students protesting official education and language policies, including a decision to revoke the newly established competitive examination system that would have allowed access to public secondary schools on the basis of merit rather than the ability to pay. Yet when the Ratsiraka regime attempted in 1978 to correct historical inequalities and make standards for the *baccalauréat* lower in the disadvantaged provinces outside the capital region, Merina students led riots against what they perceived as an inherently unfair preferential treatment policy.

The lack of access is compounded by an education system that still rewards those who are the most proficient in the French language, despite the fact that the country is officially bilingual. As of 1994, it was estimated that only between 20,000 and 30,000 citizens could be considered truly fluent in the French language and that another 2 million citizens have received, at best, a passive high school-level competence in the language. The vast majority (8 to 9 million) speak only Malagasy and, therefore, potentially find themselves at a distinct disadvantage in terms of future advancement. It is at least partially because of shortcomings in French-language abilities that

approximately 90 percent of all first-year university students are refused entry into the second year.

A final challenge revolves around the growing gap between a declining government-sponsored public school system and an increasingly vibrant and growing private school system. The Ratsiraka regime's education policy of Malagachization strengthened this primarily two-tiered education system during the 1980s. The elite and the well-off middle class placed their children in private French-language schools, while the vast majority of the relatively poorer population had little choice but to enroll their children in increasingly disadvantaged public schools. By the 1991–92 academic year, only 5,870 students were enrolled in private French-sponsored grade schools and high schools (the most prestigious of the education system), while another 199,433 students were enrolled in the second tier of private Roman Catholic schools where teaching is also in French. An undetermined small number of students were enrolled in a third tier of private schools considered "mediocre" by French-language standards, but the vast majority (1,534,142) found themselves competing in the public school system.

Public Health

Life expectancy at birth has gradually improved from an average of 37.5 years for men and 38.3 years for women in 1966 to an average of fifty-two years for men and fifty-five years for women in 1990 (for a combined average of fifty-four). Malaria remains the most serious tropical disease, although eradication campaigns against mosquitoes waged since 1948 initially resulted in spectacular declines in incidence and a dramatic decrease in the island's mortality rate during a twenty-year period. Indeed, in some regions, especially the central highlands, these campaigns were almost completely successful, although malaria continues to be prevalent in the coastal regions, especially the east coast. As prevention practices faltered during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the mosquito staged a comeback. The effect on a population with a significantly reduced resistance to malaria was devastating. For example, the Malagasy Ministry of Health reported 490,000 cases and 6,200 deaths from malaria in 1985, but these figures rose—to 760,000 cases and 11,000 deaths—in 1987.

As of 1994, other serious diseases included schistosomiasis, tuberculosis, and leprosy. The prevalence of schistosomiasis, a

parasitic ailment that spreads primarily through the passing of human wastes into ponds, irrigation canals, and slow-moving streams, reflects the continued lack of adequate sewerage facilities, especially in the rural areas. Occasional outbreaks of bubonic plague occur in urban areas, the most recent of them in 1990. Yet Madagascar has been spared many of the diseases common in tropical countries, such as trypanosomiasis, cholera, brucellosis, and yellow fever.

The occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) has increased during the 1980s and the 1990s. It is estimated that 287 of 100,000 inhabitants have gonorrhea, and 220 of 100,000 have syphilis. According to data collected from 9,574 inhabitants treated for STDs in 1987, the breakdown by type of disease was as follows: gonorrhea (38 percent); syphilis (33 percent); trichomoniasis (20 percent); and candidiasis (8 percent). According to data compiled by the World Health Organization, only three cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) were reported in the 1990–92 period, and six cases in 1993, earning Madagascar a 0.0 "case rate" (reported cases per 100,000 population).

The government has committed itself to the principle that good health is a right of each Malagasy citizen, and has made significant strides in the area of health care. A number of new hospitals and medical centers were built in various parts of the country during the 1970s and the first part of the 1980s. However, about two-thirds of the population reside at least five kilometers from a medical center, resulting in the May 1993 finding of UNICEF that 35 percent of the population lacked adequate access to health services.

Economic decline has led to a deterioration in medical services during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. In 1976, of the national budget, 9.2 percent was allocated to health care; this percentage dropped to 6.6 percent in 1981, 4.5 percent in 1990, and 2 percent in 1994. For example, as of 1993, according to UNICEF, the country had only one physician per 17,000 people. Important regional differences also exist. For example, in some provinces the ratio was as low as one physician for 35,000 persons. For the entire island, in 1993 a total of 234 medical centers were under the direction of one doctor, and the remaining 1,728 centers were under the direction of paramedics, midwives, nurses, health aides, or sanitarians. For those unable to obtain modern medical treatment, traditional medi-

cine—the use of herbs or the exorcism of malicious spirits—remains popular.

Additional factors contributing to health problems include overcrowding (in some areas five to eight persons live in a room fourteen meters square), contagious diseases such as the plague, and inadequate garbage disposal facilities. Infant mortality has risen from sixty-eight per 1,000 births in 1975 to 109 per 1,000 in 1980 and 114 per 1,000 in 1991. Malnutrition, diarrheal diseases, respiratory infections, and malaria are major causes of infant deaths. Madagascar had a serious malaria epidemic in 1990 causing the death of tens of thousands; efforts are underway for annual antimalarial campaigns, especially in the Anjafy High Plateaux.

The Economy

Government Policy and Intervention

Over the years, successive French colonial and independence-era governments have sought to modernize Madagascar's economy. Despite such efforts, the majority of Malagasy in 1994 continued to earn their livelihoods in ways fundamentally unchanged from those of their ancestors—small-scale farms supporting traditional irrigated rice cultivation, dryland farming of cassava and other foods, zebu cattle herding, or the raising of cash crops.

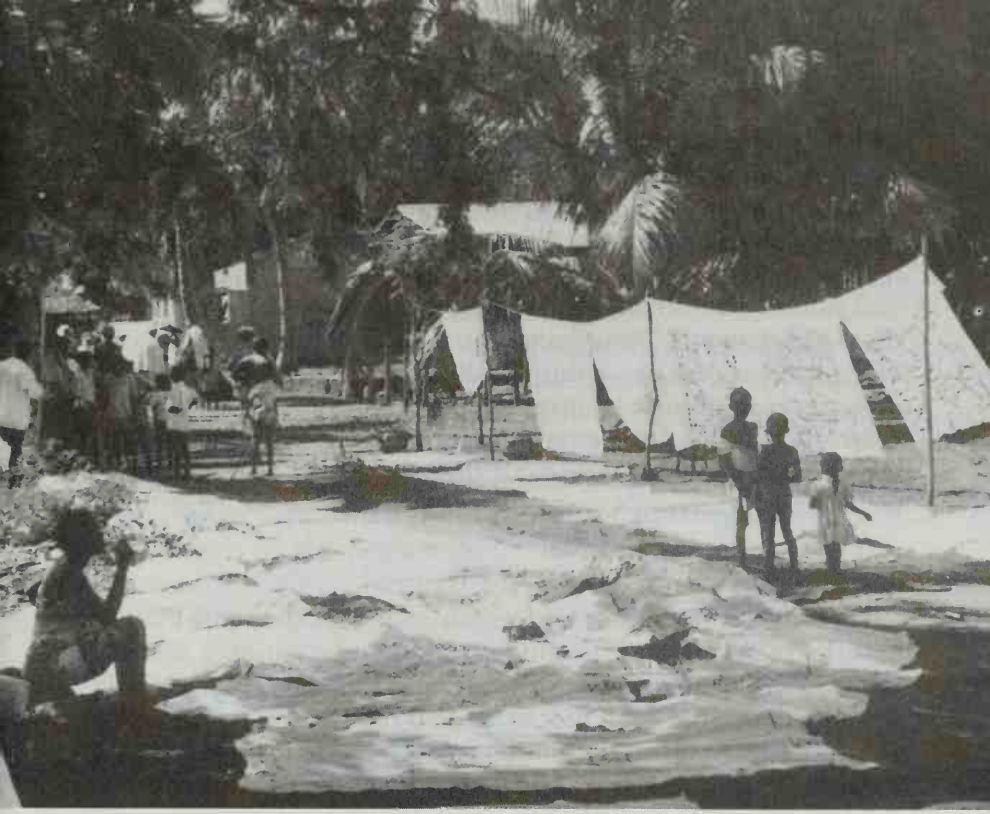
The first modern land use projects were established by French settlers or Creole immigrants from the Mascarene Islands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They introduced cash crops such as coffee, sugarcane, vanilla, cloves, and sisal for export. They also built small-scale mines to exploit the island's graphite, chromite, and uranium resources. To facilitate the processing and marketing of these commodities, the immigrants established a number of financial and commercial enterprises and built a small, modern railroad system. They then brought some Malagasy into this modern sector of the economy, either as wage laborers and sharecroppers on the foreign-owned plantations, or as low-level employees in the civil service or business enterprises. The foreign owners and managers, however, retained almost all of the benefits from these operations.

After independence the Tsiranana regime did little to change the French domination of the modern sector of the economy, despite increasing outrage at this continued eco-

nomic dependence. This anger, together with growing concern over an unequal distribution of wealth that left the southern and western parts of the island in relative poverty, caused the ouster of Tsiranana in 1972 and a shift in economic policy. The new military regime led by Ramanantsoa cut most ties with France and began to Malagachize the economy. Slow progress toward this goal, however, helped to precipitate the end of the Ramanantsoa regime in mid-1975. Only with the rise of Ratsiraka to the presidency later that year did the takeover of formerly French-dominated enterprises begin in earnest.

Ratsiraka's policy of "revolution from above" went beyond confiscating or buying out foreign firms and turning them over to Malagasy ownership; he intended to socialize the economy by nationalizing major enterprises. The state acquired majority or minority ownership in nearly all large financial, transportation, marketing, mining, and manufacturing enterprises. Firms left under private control were required to buy and sell at state-controlled prices, and the state closely monitored the repatriation of profits. In the rural sector, Ratsiraka aimed to establish local farming cooperatives. Almost as important as this institutional reform was the regime's intention, announced in an economic plan for the 1978–80 period, to increase dramatically the level of government capital investment in all sectors of the economy in order to improve the availability of goods and services to all.

By the start of the 1980s, however, Ratsiraka's attempt to fashion viable socialist institutions and to stimulate the economy through increased investment had failed to improve economic production and welfare. Economic growth throughout the 1970s had not kept pace with the expanding population. Despite the availability of significant agricultural and mineral resources, the economy was less productive than at the start of the decade when the average per capita income was already among the lowest in the world. The only apparent effect of the enhanced level of investment, which reached all-time highs in the 1978–80 period, was to put the country deeply in debt to foreign creditors and, therefore, pave the way for a series of structural adjustment agreements signed with the IMF and the World Bank during the 1980s and the early 1990s. Such agreements were necessary because as a 1993 World Bank study pointed out, between 1971 and 1991 the per capita income of Malagasy dropped 40 percent; to return to its 1971 level by



Cut-out embroidered tablecloths for sale in a village on the island of Nosy-Be
Courtesy Brian Kensley

2003, Madagascar would require a 6 percent annual growth rate.

Eventually admitting that adoption of the socialist model of economic centralization and state control was a mistake, the Ratsiraka regime in 1980 initiated a return to a more classic liberal economic model that the Zafy regime wholeheartedly adopted following its inauguration in 1993. The post-1980 Ratsiraka and Zafy regimes have overseen the privatization of parastatals (see Glossary), the disbanding of agricultural marketing boards, the ratification of more liberal investment codes favoring foreign investment, the privatization of the banking industry, diversification of traditional, primary-product exports, and greater investment in food production. The Zafy regime has made reinvigoration of the Malagasy economy its number-one priority.

The major aims of the Zafy regime's agricultural policy are fivefold. The government seeks to make the country self-sufficient with regard to rice by expanding production through such measures as increased irrigation. It is also attempting to improve the quality of the major export crops—cloves, coffee, and vanilla—but to limit their quantities because of restrictions on world demand. The regime is trying to develop new export crops such as cashews, palm oil, shellfish, and soybeans and to diversify consumer food products through introducing rainfed crops such as corn and sorghum. In addition, the government is endeavoring to improve agricultural research and breeding facilities.

Structural Adjustment

The structural adjustment requirements of the World Bank and the IMF were and remain critical to understanding the liberalization policies of the Ratsiraka and Zafy regimes. In 1980 severe balance of payments deficits led the Ratsiraka regime to seek the first of ten IMF standby and related agreements to be signed during the 1980s. The last series of agreements of the decade included one in 1988 using IMF trust funds and one in 1989 that expired in 1992. Throughout the 1980s, Madagascar also drew four times on the IMF and received four adjustment loans from the World Bank for industrial rehabilitation (1985—US$60 million), agricultural reform (1986—US$60 million), trade and industry adjustment (1987—US$100 million), and public-sector reform (1988—US$127 million).

The granting of these standby and related agreements was linked to a coordinated set of structural adjustment requirements designed to foster the liberal, export-oriented economy favored by the IMF and the World Bank. For example, an IMF standby agreement signed on July 9, 1982 to cover the 1982–83 period released 51 million in special drawing rights (SDRs—see Glossary) only after the Ratsiraka regime agreed to reduce both the current account deficit and the budget deficit, devalue the Malagasy franc (FMG—for value, see Glossary), limit domestic credit expansion, avoid any new short- or medium-term foreign borrowing, and limit public-sector salary increases. Among the major measures required by later agreements were a ceiling on rice imports, increases in producer prices of rice and coffee, and a further devaluation of the Malagasy franc. Despite a reputation for reneging on commitments

to reform, formerly Marxist Ratsiraka ironically became known as one of the IMF's "star pupils" in Africa.

According to its agreement with the IMF, Madagascar was to limit its deficit to 5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) in 1989–92. It succeeded in doing so until 1991 when production dropped, inflation increased, and tax income decreased because of political disturbances. Since then the government has not acted on the increased budget deficit, which was scheduled to be 6.2 percent of GDP in 1994, causing dissatisfaction on the part of World Bank officials.

Economic reform was stalled by the economic and political turmoil associated with the downfall of Ratsiraka and his replacement by the popularly elected Zafy regime in 1992. Although publicly critical of the IMF and World Bank during the 1993 election campaign, Zafy, who is a strong proponent of a liberal, free-market economy, initiated negotiations with these financial institutions to resume Madagascar's structural adjustment programs (and thereby gain access to more than US$1 billion in blocked development funds). However, negotiations throughout the first half of 1994 were tense as Zafy sought to avoid conditions that, no matter how logical from the macroeconomic perspective of long-term reform and development, would constitute political suicide.

General principles of reform that the World Bank considered necessary included macroeconomic stability, which implied moderate rates of inflation and of exchange; foreign trade and financial policy modifications that allowed the convertibility of the current account and liberalized import regulations; and the elimination of barriers to economic activity, such as eliminating obstacles to foreign investment and to participation in the export processing zones (EPZs). The World Bank's reform principles also involved encouraging the private sector by privatizing the parastatals, as well as concentrating government investment on infrastructure programs and the development of human resources by improving education, including technical education, and health facilities, including family planning to limit population growth. Among the specific reforms demanded by the World Bank were the revision of the 1994 budget, a new timetable for proposed privatization of parastatals, further reforms of the public sector, and the restructuring of terms for marketing agricultural products, most notably vanilla.

The IMF echoed these demands and added several more. These included allowing the Malagasy franc to float freely on the international currency market, restructuring the National Bank for Rural Development, privatizing the National Bank for Trade Development, and forcing all banks to maintain reserves of 10 percent of all deposits. To avoid pressures from the World Bank, the government sought funds from other sources. Considerable furor developed in the spring of 1994, when it became known that without the knowledge of the minister of finance, who was supposed to authorize such transactions, or the prime minister, but with the agreement of president Zafy and the president of the National Assembly, Richard Andriamanjato, the governor of the Central Bank of the Malagasy Republic, Raoul Ravelomanana, had signed promissory notes to several European banks committing Madagascar to repay loans of US$2 million. In short, the Zafy regime must balance the need for international funds (and the conditions that accompany their disbursement) with the need to maintain popular support if Zafy intends to seek a second term in office.

National Accounts and Budget

Economists note that Madagascar's economy severely deteriorated from the 1960s to the late 1980s, particularly as a result of the misguided economic policies of the Ratsiraka regime. Whereas the growth rate in the GDP rose at an average of 2.9 percent in real terms during the 1960s, during the 1970s and the early 1980s this figure declined to 0.2 percent, compared with 2.6 percent population growth. Real GDP rebounded in the latter half of the 1980s, reaching a high of 4 percent in 1989. GDP increased at 1.1 percent per year in the 1980s and at 1 percent in 1992, but the economic output was unable to keep pace with population growth. This can be seen in Madagascar's economic ranking relative to other countries. In terms of gross national product (GNP—see Glossary) per capita, for example, the country declined from a World Bank ranking of the thirtieth poorest country in the world in 1979 (GNP per capita of US$290) to the tenth poorest in 1991 (GNP per capita of US$210).

Going beyond the traditional indicators of GDP and GNP per capita, however, Madagascar is doing better than might be thought. For example, according to the *Human Development Report* published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1993, Madagascar ranked 128th in the

world (and seventeenth in Africa) in terms of "human development." This category represents a composite score of several indicators of development, such as life expectancy and literacy. The UNDP report further notes that, despite a slight drop in the early 1990s, Madagascar's human development steadily advanced during the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s.

The Zafy regime tried to balance the need for economic growth with a desire to enhance social welfare after the turbulent transition period of the early 1990s by putting together a Public Investment Program for 1994–96. The priorities of the US$326 million budget are clearly demonstrated by the breakdown of investments according to four broad categories: infrastructure (US$160 million—49 percent), with transportation receiving the largest share of US$87 million; producing sector (US$79 million—24 percent), with US$53.5 million of this devoted to agriculture; social assistance, including education, health care, and social assistance (US$52.2 million—16 percent); and public administration (US$32.4 million—10 percent). An overriding interest in development as opposed to security is clearly demonstrated by the relatively small amount of investment funds (US$2 million—0.6 percent) allocated to the Malagasy Armed Forces. Finally, the percentage of investment funds slated for each of the individual regions suggests an awareness of the need to favor those that historically have been neglected. The breakdown of investments by region in order of importance is as follows: Antsiranana (28 percent), Toliara (21 percent), Mahajanga (18 percent), Toamasina (15 percent), Antananarivo (10 percent), and Fianarantsoa (9 percent).

Balance of Payments and Debt

The deterioration of the Malagasy economy that peaked in the 1980s is clearly demonstrated by the evolution of balance of payments problems and a growing debt burden (see table 2, Appendix). In 1980 Madagascar experienced a trade deficit of US$328 million and a service deficit of US$286 million, the combination of which contributed to a record current account deficit of US$568 million for the year. After nearly a decade of implementing the structural adjustment demands of the IMF and the World Bank, the Ratsiraka regime reduced the current account deficit to US$128 million in 1989. Among the economic trends contributing to this were a sharp reduction in imports and significant increases in bilateral and multilateral foreign assistance. Progress in reducing the current account

deficit was reversed at the beginning of the 1990s, however, because of disruptions caused by the transition to democracy.

A rising debt burden constitutes the most notable indicator of Madagascar's fiscal dilemmas. Whereas as late as 1978 Madagascar had only accumulated US$293.5 million in debt, massive borrowing on the international market during a three-year span led in 1981 to the quadrupling of this figure to US$1.37 billion. By the end of the decade, this figure had nearly tripled to US$3.94 billion. Even worse, Madagascar's external debt exceeded annual GNP after 1986, reaching its height in 1988 when external debt as a percentage of GNP exceeded 160 percent.

The downfall of the Ratsiraka regime and the turbulence associated with the subsequent period of democratic transition exacerbated the debt crisis and presented the Zafy regime with one of its greatest economic challenges. As of November 1993, Madagascar's external debt was estimated to exceed US$4 billion, with an outstanding initial debt of US$295 million and rescheduled debt of US$625 million being owed to Paris Club (see Glossary) members. Whereas the outstanding initial debt was owed primarily to France (US$138 million) and Japan (US$126 million), several countries were owed the majority of outstanding rescheduled debt, including France (US$182 million), Italy (US$96 million), Japan (US$84 million), Spain (US$76 million), and Germany (US$55 million). Approximately US$77 million was also owed to commercial banks in the London Club (see Glossary), including the Arab Intercontinental Bank (US$31 million), Chase Manhattan Bank of Paris (US$9.5 million), Banque Nationale de Paris (US$7.5 million), and Banque Nationale d'Algérie (US$7.2 million).

Traditional Agriculture

Traditional farming methods vary from one ethnic group or location to another, according to population density, climate, water supply, and soil. The most intensive form of cultivation is practiced among the Betsileo and Merina groups of the central highlands, where population densities are the highest. At the other extreme are the extensive slash-and-burn methods of brush clearing and shifting cultivation in the south and the east.

The Betsileo are probably the most efficient traditional rice farmers. They construct rice paddies on narrow terraces ascending the sides of steep valleys in the southern portion of

the central highlands, creating an intricate landscape reminiscent of Indonesia or the Philippines. The irrigation systems use all available water, which flows through narrow canals for considerable distances. Some of the rice paddies cover no more than a few square meters. Only those surfaces that cannot be irrigated are planted in dryland crops.

In parts of the central highlands, two rice crops a year can be grown, but not on the same plot. The Betsileo use a variety of local species that can be sown at different times, employing irrigation to grow some varieties in the dry season and waiting for the rainy season to plant others. The fields surrounding the typical Betsileo village often represent a checkerboard of tiny plots in different stages of the crop cycle.

The cultivation cycle begins with the repair of irrigation and drainage canals and plowing, which is performed with a long-handled spade or hoe. Manure or fertilizer is then spread over the field. If the supply of manure or artificial fertilizer is limited, only the seedbeds are fertilized. After fertilizing, family and neighbors join in a festive trampling of the fields, using cattle if available. Occasionally, trampling takes the place of plowing altogether. If the rice is to be sown broadcast, it may be done on the same day as trampling. In the more advanced areas, the seedlings are raised in protected seedbeds and transplanted later.

Rice-farming techniques among the Merina resemble those of the Betsileo but are usually less advanced and intensive. The Merina territory includes some areas where land is more plentiful, and broader areas permit less laborious means of irrigation and terracing. Although rice is still the dominant crop, more dryland species are grown than in the Betsileo region, and greater use is made of the hillsides and grasslands.

In the forested areas of the eastern coast, the Betsimisaraka and Tanala peoples also practice irrigated rice culture where possible. The dominant form of land use, however, is shifting cultivation by the slash-and-burn method, known as *tavy*. The smaller trees and brush are cut down and left to dry, then burned just before the rainy season. The cleared area is usually planted with mountain rice and corn. After two or three years of cultivation, the fields are usually left fallow and are gradually covered by secondary vegetation known as *savoka*. After ten or twenty years, the area may be cultivated again.

Because the slash-and-burn method destroys the forest and other vegetation cover, and promotes erosion, it has been

declared illegal. Government assistance is offered to those cultivators who prepare rice paddies instead, and those practicing *tavy* are fined or, in extreme cases, imprisoned. Despite the penalties, and much to the chagrin of forestry agents, *tavy* continues to be practiced. Even those who cultivate wet paddies often practice *tavy* on the side. The crop cycle for *tavy* is shorter than for irrigated rice, and generations of experience have taught that it is one of the only forms of insurance against the droughts that occur about every three years. Moreover, the precipitous slopes and heavy, irregular rains make it difficult to maintain affordable and controllable irrigation systems.

A similar system of shifting cultivation is practiced in the arid, sparsely populated regions of the extreme south and southwest. The dry brush or grassland is burned off, and drought-resistant sorghum or corn is sown in the ashes. In the Antandroy and some Mahafaly areas, however, the main staples of subsistence—cassava, corn, beans, and sorghum—are also grown around the villages in permanent fields enclosed by hedges.

Dry-season cultivation in empty streambeds is practiced largely on the western coast and in the southwest and is called *baiboho*. The crops are sown after the last rising of the waters during the rainy seasons, and after the harvest fresh alluvial deposits naturally replenish the soil. Lima beans (known as Cape peas) are raised by this system on the Mangoky River system delta, along with tobacco and a number of newer crops.

The traditional livestock-raising peoples are the Bara, Sakalava, and other groups of the south and the west, where almost every family owns some zebu cattle. The common practice is to allow the animals to graze almost at will, and the farmers take few precautions against the popular custom of cattle stealing. These farmers are also accustomed to burning off the dry grass to promote the growth of new vegetation for animal feed. The cattle generally are slaughtered only for ceremonial occasions, but these are so frequent that the per capita meat consumption among the cattle herders is very high.

Fishing is popular as a sideline by farmers who supplement their farm produce with fish from freshwater rivers, lakes, and ponds. Perhaps two-thirds of the total yearly catch is consumed for subsistence; transportation costs to the capital make the price of marketed fish prohibitively expensive to other domestic consumers. The introduction of tilapia fish from the African mainland in the 1950s increased inland aquaculture. Many

families, particularly in the central highlands, have established fish ponds to raise carp, black bass, or trout. The breeding of fish in rice fields, however, requires sophisticated water control and a strong guard against dynamiting, poisoning, and poaching, which remain chronic problems.

Agricultural Production

The 1984–85 agricultural census estimated that 8.7 million people live in the rural areas and that 65 percent of the active population within these areas lives at the subsistence level. The census also noted that average farm size was 1.2 hectares, although irrigated rice plots in the central highlands were often 0.5 hectares. Only 5.2 percent (3 million hectares) of the country's total land area of 58.2 million hectares is under cultivation; of this hectarage, fewer than 2 million hectares are permanently cultivated. Agriculture is critical to Madagascar's economy in that it provides nearly 80 percent of exports, constituting 33 percent of GDP in 1993, and in 1992 employed almost 80 percent of the labor force. Moreover, 50.7 percent (300,000 square kilometers) of the total landmass of 592,000 square kilometers supports livestock rearing, while 16 percent (484,000 hectares) of land under cultivation is irrigated.

The government significantly reorganized the agricultural sector of the economy beginning in 1972. Shortly after Ratsiraka assumed power, the government announced that holdings in excess of 500 hectares would be turned over to landless families, and in 1975 it reported that 500,000 hectares of land had been processed under the program. The long-range strategy of the Ratsiraka regime was to create collective forms of farm management, but not necessarily of ownership. By the year 2000, some 72 percent of agricultural output was to come from farm cooperatives, 17 percent from state farms, and only 10 percent from privately managed farms. Toward this end, the Ministry of Agricultural Production coordinated with more than seventy parastatal agencies in the areas of land development, agricultural extension, research, and marketing activities. However, these socialist-inspired rural development policies, which led to a severe decline in per capita agricultural output during the 1970s, were at the center of the liberalization policies of the 1980s and the structural adjustment demands of the IMF and the World Bank.

The evolution of rice production—the main staple food and the dominant crop—offers insight into some of the problems

associated with agricultural production that were compounded by the Ratsiraka years. Rice production grew by less than 1 percent per year during the 1970–79 period, despite the expansion of the cultivated paddy area by more than 3 percent per year. Moreover, the share of rice available for marketing in the rapidly growing urban areas declined from 16 or 17 percent of the total crop in the early 1970s to about 11 or 12 percent during the latter part of the decade. As a result, Madagascar became a net importer of rice beginning in 1972, and by 1982 was importing nearly 200,000 tons per year—about 10 percent of the total domestic crop and about equal to the demand from urban customers.

The inefficient system of agricultural supply and marketing, which since 1972 increasingly had been placed under direct state control, was a major factor inhibiting more efficient and expanded rice production. From 1973 to 1977, one major parastatal agency, the Association for the National Interest in Agricultural Products (Société d'Intérêt National des Produits Agricoles—SINPA), had a monopoly in collecting, importing, processing, and distributing a number of commodities, most notably rice. Corruption leading to shortages of rice in a number of areas caused a scandal in 1977, and the government was forced to take over direct responsibility for rice marketing. In 1982 SINPA maintained a large share in the distribution system for agricultural commodities; it subcontracted many smaller parastatal agencies to handle distribution in certain areas. The decreasing commercialization of rice and other commodities continued, however, suggesting that transportation bottlenecks and producer prices were undermining official distribution channels.

To promote domestic production and reduce foreign imports of rice, the Ratsiraka regime enacted a series of structural adjustment reforms during the 1980s. These included the removal of government subsidies on the consumer purchase price of rice in 1984 and the disbanding of the state marketing monopoly controlled by SINPA in 1985. Rice growers responded by moderately expanding production by 9.3 percent during the latter half of the 1980s from 2.18 million tons in 1985 to 2.38 million tons in 1989, and rice imports declined dramatically by 70 percent between 1985 and 1989. However, the Ratsiraka regime failed to restore self-sufficiency in rice production (estimated at between 2.8 million and 3.0 million tons), and rice imports rose again in 1990. In 1992 rice produc-

tion occupied about two-thirds of the cultivated area and produced 40 percent of total agricultural income, including fishing, which was next with 19 percent, as well as livestock raising and forestry (see table 3, Appendix).

In February 1994, Cyclone Geralda hit Madagascar just as the rice harvesting was about to start and had a serious impact on the self-sufficiency goal. In addition, the southern tip of Madagascar suffered from severe drought in late 1993, resulting in emergency assistance to 1 million people from the United Nations (UN) World Food Program (WFP). This WFP aid was later transformed into a food-for-work program to encourage development.

Other food crops have witnessed small increases in production from 1985 to 1992. Cassava, the second major food crop in terms of area planted (almost everywhere on the island) and probably in quantity consumed, increased in production from 2.14 million tons in 1985 to 2.32 million tons in 1992. During this same period, corn production increased from 140,000 tons to 165,000 tons, sweet potato production increased from 450,000 tons to 487,000 tons, and bananas dropped slightly from 255,000 tons to 220,000 tons.

Several export crops are also important to Madagascar's economy. Coffee prices witnessed a boom during the 1980s, making coffee the leading export crop of the decade; in 1986 coffee earned a record profit of US$151 million. Prices within the coffee market gradually declined during the remainder of the 1980s, and earnings reached a low of US$28 million in 1991 although they rebounded to US$58 million in 1992. Cotton traditionally has been the second major export crop, but most output during the early 1980s was absorbed by the local textile industry. Although cotton output rose from 27,000 tons in 1987 to 46,000 tons in 1988, once again raising the possibility of significant export earnings, the combination of drought and a faltering agricultural extension service in the southwest contributed to a gradual decline in output to only 20,000 tons in 1992.

Two other export crops—cloves and vanilla—have also declined in importance from the 1980s to the 1990s. Indonesia, the primary importer of Malagasy cloves, temporarily halted purchases in 1983 as a result of sufficient domestic production, and left Madagascar with a huge surplus. A collapse in international prices for cloves in 1987, compounded by uncertain future markets and the normal cyclical nature of the crop,

has led to a gradual decline in production from a high of 14,600 tons in 1991 to 7,500 tons in 1993. Similarly, the still state-regulated vanilla industry (state-regulated prices for coffee and cloves were abolished in 1988–89) found itself under considerable financial pressure after 1987 because Indonesia reentered the international market as a major producer, and synthetic competitors emerged in the two major markets of the United States and France. As a result, vanilla production has declined from a high of 1,500 tons in 1988 and 1989 to only 700 tons in 1993.

The fisheries sector, especially the export of shrimp, is the most rapidly growing area of the agricultural economy (see table 4, Appendix). This production is making up for lost revenues and potential structural decline within the ailing coffee, vanilla, and clove trade. Since 1988 total fish production has expanded nearly 23 percent from 92,966 tons to 114,370 tons in 1993. The export of shrimp constituted an extremely important portion of this production, providing export earnings of US$48 million in 1993. It is estimated by Aqualma, the major multinational corporation in the shrimp industry, that expansion into roughly 35,000 hectares of swampland on the country's west coast may allow for the expansion of production from the current 6,500 tons and US$40 million in revenues to nearly 75,000 tons and US$400 million in revenues by the end of the 1990s. The prospects are also good for promoting greater levels of fish cultivation in the rice paddies, and exports of other fish products, most notably crab, tuna, and lobster, have been rising.

Livestock production is limited in part because of traditional patterns of livestock ownership that have hampered commercialization. Beef exports in the early 1990s decreased because of poor government marketing practices, rundown slaughtering facilities, and inadequate veterinary services. Approximately 99 percent of cattle are zebu cattle. In 1990 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN estimated that Madagascar had 10.3 million cattle, 1.7 million sheep and goats, and some 21 million chickens.

Industrial Development

After registering a negative average annual growth rate of –2.8 percent from 1981 to 1986, industrial development improved from 1987 to 1991 with a positive, albeit small, average annual growth rate of 1.1 percent. As of 1993, it was esti-

Traffic on a street in Antananarivo
Courtesy J.D. von Pischke

mated that industrial output was responsible for 13 percent of GDP, and that the food-processing, mining, and energy sectors contributed 65 percent of the manufacturing portion of this total.

The establishment of EPZs and the passage of a new investment code in 1990 contributed to an expansion of industrial output (see table 5, Appendix). Despite the implications of the title, the EPZs do not require registered companies to establish themselves in specific geographic zones but merely constitute entities that fall under a specific fiscal code. The EPZs are financially attractive in that registered companies only pay one tax on profits (*impôt sur les bénéfices*) and another on revenues from capital transfers (*impôt sur les revenus de capitaux mobiliers*), and, in the case of the former, receive an exemption of as much as the first fifteen years of operation. From 1990 to 1993, 100 new companies had established themselves in the EPZs,

creating more than 17,500 jobs and generating more than US$113 million in foreign investments. The majority of these firms were distributed among three economic sectors—clothing (48 percent), handicrafts (13 percent), and agro-processing (9 percent). Only 14 percent were owned by Malagasy; the remainder were owned by French (55 percent), Mauritian (16 percent), South African (4 percent), or other nationals (11 percent). Another 7,000 jobs and US$70 million in investments were generated by more than 160 new companies taking advantage of the new investment code. The creation by the International Finance Corporation (IFC—see Glossary) in June 1994 of the US$2.6 million Madagascar Capital Development Fund is designed to encourage Malagasy firms to establish themselves in the EPZs.

Madagascar contains a wide variety of minerals, but most of the deposits exist in scattered and relatively inaccessible locations. The government nationalized all mineral deposits in 1975, bringing mineral exploitation under the National Military Office for Strategic Industries (Office Militaire National pour les Industries Stratégiques). In 1990 a new mining investment code that encouraged private investment and exploitation was implemented, but the results have been disappointing. Several companies, including most recently Royal Dutch Shell, which disbanded its operations in early 1994, have sought unsuccessfully to find petroleum.

In another venture, in August 1993, a Swiss enterprise, International Capital and Securities Exchange, obtained the right to explore and mine for gold over a twenty-five-year period. French government sources estimate Madagascar's gold production at about three to four tons of gold annually and its potential yield double that. In 1992, however, as a result of smuggling, only thirty-seven kilograms of gold were officially exported.

Madagascar has reserves of bauxite, chromite, graphite, limestone, mica, nickel, and limestone. The exploitation of these minerals varies. More than 108,000 tons of chromium ores and concentrates, mostly in Andriamena in the central area and near Befandriana Avaratra in the north central area (Madagascar is the world's tenth largest producer), and 10,600 tons of graphite were successfully extracted in 1992. In contrast, the production of ilmenite ore, used in the manufacture of titanium, ceased in 1977 (although a joint Malagasy-Canadian firm is expected to resume production beginning in

1995). In the southeast, approximately 100 million tons of bauxite deposits at Manantenima are at present unexploited. A variety of other minerals are mined on a small scale, including agate, beryl, quartz, garnet, amazonite, amethyst, moonstone, tourmaline, citrine, and a number of abrasives and feldspars.

Madagascar depends completely on foreign imports to satisfy its oil needs, but it also refines some petroleum for export. Two-thirds of all electricity demand is met by production from seven hydroelectric power plants that serve Antananarivo, Antsirabe, and the Andriamena chrome mine; the remaining one-third is met by thermal stations. Many plants have their own small diesel or steam generators. Energy needs are also met by firewood and charcoal, which has contributed to the precarious nature of the country's forests and serious erosion problems, and by the bagasse from sugarcane used in sugar production; two power stations using bagasse as fuel and a solar energy plant are planned. Reserves of 100 million tons of coal are found primarily near Sakoa in the southwest, although fewer than 10,000 tons are used on an annual basis. The government seeks to expand domestic coal use.

Another area that the government has begun to develop is that of tourism, which has good potential in view of Madagascar's exotic flora and fauna, and some 5,000 kilometers of beaches. In early 1989, the regime launched a tourism plan that was designed to bring in 100,000 tourists annually by 1995. Thus far, however, the greatest number of tourists attracted has been 52,900 in 1990, compared with 250,000 on the much smaller island of Mauritius. To achieve its goal, Madagascar needs additional infrastructure in the way of transportation, accommodations, and other facilities, as well as a greater sense of security on the part of foreigners—in 1993 gendarmes shot two German researchers in error, causing Germany, which was Madagascar's second largest tourist source, to boycott the island.

Foreign Trade

As of 1992, 81.1 percent (US$311 million) of Madagascar's total exports of US$383.5 million were to the industrialized West. Four countries served as the primary destination of Malagasy goods: France (30.4 percent), the United States (13.3 percent), Germany (10.1 percent) and Japan (7.5 percent) (see table 6, Appendix). In contrast, only 51 percent (US$313.2 million) of Madagascar's total imports of US$614.1 million in 1992

came from the industrialized West (a sharp decline from 78.7 percent in 1980), and only France remained a significant partner (providing 29.9 of Madagascar's imports). Whereas Japan and Germany were responsible for 4.3 and 3.9 percent of Madagascar's imports, respectively, the United States contributed a meager 1.1 percent. Russia remains marginal in terms of both imports and exports (less than 1 percent), and, along with the other former communist countries, has never constituted a major trading partner of Madagascar. In aggregate terms, Madagascar's exports to the industrialized West dropped slightly from US$316 million in 1980 to US$311 million in 1992.

Two trends in trade with the developing world stand out. First, Madagascar slightly increased the percentage of goods exported to other southern countries from 14.3 percent in 1980 to 18.8 percent in 1992. Other African countries were the major market for Malagasy goods (11.0 percent) in 1992, Asia came in second (7.1 percent), and the Middle East and Latin America together imported only 0.5 percent. In aggregate terms, Madagascar's exports to the developing south expanded from US$57.5 million in 1980 to US$72.3 million in 1992.

A second, more noticeable shift occurred in terms of Madagascar's imports from other southern countries, increasing from US$55 million in 1980 to US$301 million in 1992. In sharp contrast to regional patterns related to exports, Madagascar imported the majority of its goods from Asia (15.5 percent) and the Middle East (8.5 percent). Other African countries were the source of only 6.1 percent of Madagascar's imports, and Latin America registered the negligible total of 2.1 percent. A burgeoning trade deficit that exceeded US$230 million in 1992 remains one of the biggest trade problems confronting Malagasy policy makers.

Transportation and Telecommunications

The expansion of the economy is hindered by an inadequate transportation system that deteriorated throughout the 1980s (see fig. 4). Only 4,000 kilometers (10 percent) of an estimated 40,000-kilometer road network are asphalted (no all-weather road links the capital with the southern and northern extremes of the island), and the state-controlled railroad consists of 1,095 kilometers of track in two limited (and separate) railroad systems. The first connects the capital of Antananarivo with the port city of Toamasina, the rice-producing area of

Lake Alaotra, and the town of Antsirabe; the second connects the regional capital of Fianarantsoa with the coastal town of Manakara.

The country's ports and airports fare better than the land or rail network. Madagascar has fifteen major ports along the 4,828-kilometer coastline, of which Toamasina, Mahajanga, and Antsiranana are the most important. The air network revolves around the main international airport, Ivato-Antananarivo. The country technically contains 211 airfields, but only approximately 50 percent are usable, and only thirty maintain permanent-surface runways. Whereas the national airline, Air Madagascar, is two-thirds owned by the government (Air France owns the remaining one-third), twelve airports (including Ivato-Antananarivo) were taken over in 1990 by a private company, Aéroports de Madagascar.

In 1994 Madagascar's telecommunications system was sparse, serving only commercial users and residents of large towns and cities. Almost 60 percent of the country's 27,200 telephones were located in Antananarivo in 1989. Figures for that year showed that the country averaged only three telephones per 1,000 inhabitants, and service was limited to government offices, large companies, and a few wealthy families in urban areas. The telecommunications system deteriorated appreciably during the 1980s so that Madagascar had fewer telephones in 1994 than in 1975. Two satellite ground stations near the capital provide excellent international links via the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization's (Intelsat's) Indian Ocean satellite and the Symphonie ground station, working with a European telecommunications satellite.

Broadcast services are thinly scattered countrywide. The entire country has only seventeen mediumwave amplitude modulation (AM) radio stations—a powerful transmitter in the capital and sixteen low-power repeaters in other cities. A government-owned, AM shortwave station broadcasting in French and Malagasy on five frequencies reaches listeners in remote locations and in neighboring countries. In addition, Radio Nederlands has a powerful station in western Madagascar that relays programs throughout Africa and the Indian Ocean on shortwave frequencies. Antananarivo and two other cities each have a single frequency modulation (FM) station. Thirty-seven low-power television transmitters broadcast for three and a half hours daily in urban areas.

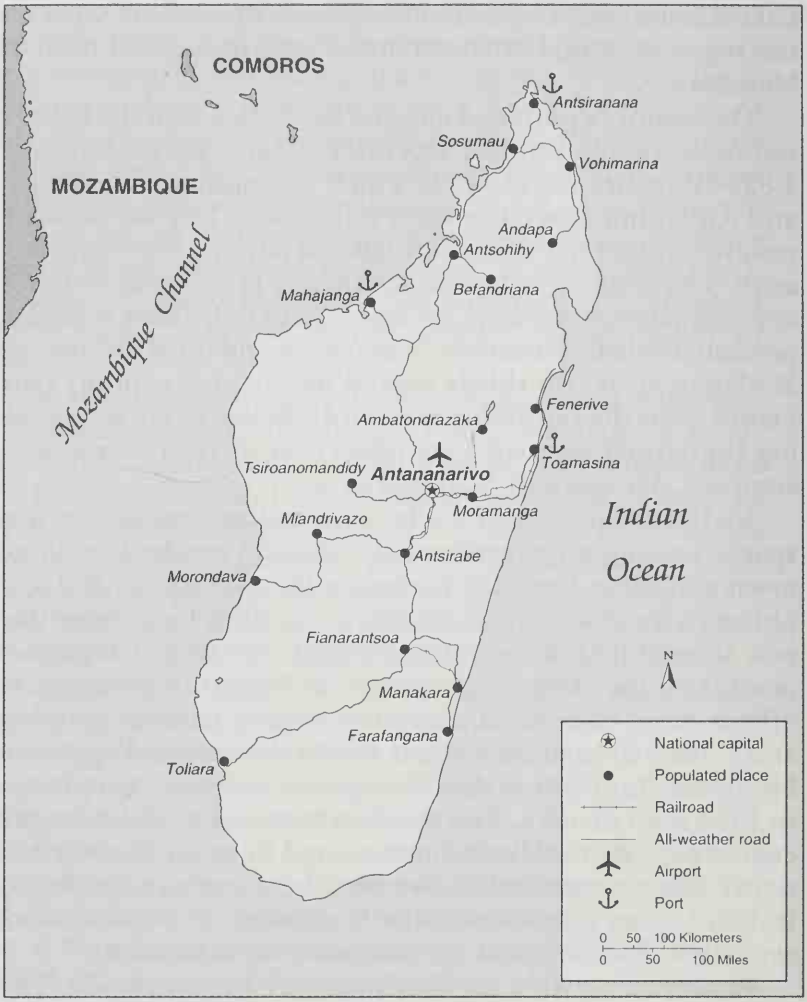


Figure 4. Madagascar: Transportation System, 1994

Government and Politics

Constitution and Institutions of Governance

The Third Republic received its first expression of popular support and legitimacy on August 19, 1992, when the constitutional framework constructed by the National Conference was approved by more than 75 percent of those voting in a popular

referendum (the constitution took effect on September 12). On this date, the people overwhelmingly approved a new constitution consisting of 149 articles that provided for the separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government; the creation of a multiparty political system; and the protection of individual human rights and freedom of speech.

The power of the executive branch is divided between a president who is elected by universal suffrage and a prime minister from the parliament who is nominated by his/her peers but who must be approved by the president. If the nominee for prime minister does not achieve an absolute majority of support within the parliament, the president may choose a candidate from the parliament who will serve for one year. As captured in the Malagasy concept *ray aman-dreny* (father and mother of the nation), enshrined in Article 44 of the constitution, the president serves as the symbol of national unity. The president also is the recognized leader of foreign policy and constitutes by far the single most powerful political person within the country. All presidential decrees must be countersigned, however, and the president is bound by the constitutional reality that the prime minister is responsible for the functioning of the government.

The president is elected for a five-year period and is limited to two terms in office. In the event that no candidate wins a simple majority of the popular vote, a run-off election is held between the two leading candidates within a period of two months. The most important unwritten law regarding the executive branch revolves around the *côtier*/central highlands distinction. If a *côtier* is elected president, it is understood that a Merina will fill the position of prime minister, and vice versa. In the case of the first national elections held under the Third Republic, for example, the elected president—Zafy—who is a *côtier*, chose a prime minister—Francisque Ravony—from the ranks of the Merina (although several of the Merina elite were not entirely happy with the choice because Ravony is only half Merina).

The constitution provides for a bicameral parliament composed of a Senate and a National Assembly (Assembleé Nationale). The Senate represents territorial groups and serves as the consultative chamber on social and economic issues. Two-thirds of its members are chosen by an Electoral College, and the remaining one-third are chosen by the president. Envi-

sioned elections for 1994 had not been held as of June 1994. The National Assembly consists of 138 deputies elected by universal suffrage using a proportional representation list-system. Both senators and deputies serve for four years. The June 16, 1993, elections resulted in about half the deputies elected being members of the Forces Vives. The remainder belonged to six parties, of which the largest had fifteen deputies and the smallest nine deputies. The parliament as a whole operates with a variety of classic parliamentary measures, such as a vote of no confidence, that enable it to serve as a check on the power of the executive.

A new system of local governance under the constitution is known as the Decentralized Territorial Authorities (Collectivités Territoriales Décentralisées). According to the decentralization law adopted by the National Assembly in March 1994, twenty-eight regions (*faritra*), more than 100 departments (*fileovana*), and fewer than 1,000 communes (*faribohitra*) have been created. Certain urban communes, such as the cities of Antananarivo, Nosy-Be, and Sainte Marie, will function as departments. Envisioned as regional vehicles for popular input in which members are elected by universal suffrage, these authorities have yet to be implemented; their exact role in the policy-making process remains ill-defined, but it is contemplated that the national government will handle such areas as foreign affairs, defense, public security, justice, currency, and broad economic planning and policy, leaving economic implementation to the decentralized bodies. However, the Zafy regime is confident that, once functioning, these regional boards will take the political initiative away from the so-called federalist opposition, which has been seeking to shift power away from the central government to the regions.

A strong, independent judiciary is also enshrined in the 1992 constitution. An eleven-member Supreme Court serves as the highest arbiter of the laws of the land. Other judicial bodies include the Administrative and Financial Constitutional Court, the Appeals Courts, tribunals, and the High Court of Justice. The creation of this complex system indicates the desire of the constitutional framers for a society built upon the rule of law. Indeed, the constitution explicitly outlines the fundamental rights of individual citizens and groups (most notably freedom of speech) and guarantees the existence of an independent press free from government control or censorship.

The creation of a truly free and fair multiparty system is the centerpiece of the new constitutional order. In sharp contrast to the Ratsiraka era, when political parties could only exist under the ideological umbrella of the FNDR, democratization of the political system has led to the proliferation of political parties of all ideological stripes. In the first legislative elections held under the Third Republic in 1993, for example, more than 120 political parties fielded at least 4,000 candidates for a total of 138 legislative seats. Despite constitutional guarantees concerning the rights of citizens to form political parties without fear of government retribution, parties that call for ethnic or religious segregation or demonstrably endanger national unity are subject to being banned.

The electoral system is designed to promote and facilitate widespread popular participation. In fact, it is argued that the proportional representation list-system (including the rule of the largest remainder) for electing deputies actually encourages large numbers of candidates to take part. All resident citizens eighteen years of age or older can vote in elections, but candidates must be at least twenty-one years of age to participate. Electoral registers are usually revised during a two-month period beginning in December, and the country is divided into sixty-eight constituencies for electoral purposes. Although there was a four-month gap between the end of the first presidential elections and the first legislative elections held under the Third Republic in 1993, legislative elections are supposed to be held no less than two months after the end of presidential elections. The next presidential elections are scheduled for 1998.

The *Fokonolona* and Traditional Governance

Madagascar has a tradition of limited village self-rule associated with the institution of the *fokonolona*—a village council composed of village elders and other local notables. After having been alternately suppressed and encouraged by the French colonial authorities, authorities officially revived the *fokonolona* in 1962 in an attempt to involve local communities in plans for rural economic and social development. The perceived usefulness of the *fokonolona* derived from its traditional role of maintaining order in the village and providing social and economic assistance.

In 1973 the Ramanantsoa military regime furthered the self-rule concept by establishing self-governing bodies at the local

level. Government functionaries who were formerly appointed were to be replaced by elected officials. Yet it was not until 1975, under the leadership of Ratsiraka, that the *fokonolona* was given constitutional recognition as the "decentralized collective of the state" responsible for economic, social, cultural, and municipal development at the local level. Despite his best intentions, during Ratsiraka's rule the *fokonolona* was still far from an idealized self-governing institution. Its governing bodies were dominated, as in the past, by conservative elders, and participation by youth was either minimal or not encouraged by elders. Under the Zafy regime the *fokonolona* will continue to offer policy guidance at the local level, but it has been superseded by the Decentralized Territorial Collectives.

The *fokonolona* often is characterized as one of the most characteristic Malagasy social institutions. It is, in fact, not a "pan-Malagasy" cultural element but an institution that evolved among the Merina and was implanted in other parts of the country by both the Merina and the French. Even among the neighboring Betsileo, it is considered something of a foreign implantation. Nonetheless, the *fokonolona* offers aid to members in need (such as when a child is born or a funeral is held), undertakes village projects (such as the repair of rice fields or village buildings after a cyclone), coordinates mutual aid at planting and harvest time, and occasionally chastises—or ostracizes—those considered wrongdoers.

The *fokonolona* ties individuals together in a network of mutual obligations. Its meetings bring together in a cooperative setting people of different kinship groups within a village, and the common use of fictive kinship terms promotes the creation of an atmosphere of amity and solidarity (*fihavanana*), necessary for sincere cooperation. The *fokonolona*, however, traditionally has not been a democratic institution despite its town-meeting character, because its meetings tend to be dominated by influential local notables. Local political power remains a function of age and membership in a high-status kinship group; in some cases, the descendants of slaves (*andevo*) attend *fokonolona* meetings, but their influence is marginal.

At *fokonolona* meetings, it is possible to see one of Madagascar's most striking cultural expressions, the *kabary* (discourse), a lengthy speech in which a speaker uses flowery and poetic language to make a critical point in a most indirect fashion. The people will listen silently from beginning to end. Those who disagree will not express their opinion but will counter

with a speech that at first seems to support the first speaker but that actually contains a hidden counterproposal. Speakers may express their views by telling jokes. If people laugh or if they simply act according to the second speaker's proposal, the first has lost. Rarely if ever does an open confrontation between speakers occur.

Foreign Relations

Close Franco-Malagasy ties formed the cornerstone of Madagascar's foreign policy in the early independence years, as witnessed by the signing of fourteen agreements and conventions with France. An Economic and Financial Cooperation Agreement signed in June 1960 specified and regulated Madagascar's status as a member of the Franc Zone. Other economic agreements ensured the sanctity of existing French economic interests and, therefore, continued strong levels of French influence over Madagascar's economy. The Malagasy role was largely limited to the impact of decision makers in the upper echelons of government and input at the grass-roots level by small-scale farmers producing for subsistence or export. Other sectors by and large remained the domain of French trading conglomerates, large-scale agriculturalists, or Chinese and Indian intermediaries.

In the realm of security, defense agreements underscored France's willingness to provide strategic protection for Madagascar. France was allowed access to military bases and installations in Madagascar. These included the natural harbor of Antsiranana at the northern end of the island and the Ivato airfield near Antananarivo. France also enjoyed complete freedom of movement in the island's airspaces and coastal waters. In return for these benefits, France provided military aid, technical assistance, and training for Malagasy security forces.

French influence was equally strong in the cultural realm. The country's intellectual elite was French-speaking, and many prominent Malagasy studied in French *lycées* and acquired degrees from French universities. Newspapers and periodicals published in French as well as Malagasy circulated in Antananarivo and other major cities. French was the language of instruction for higher education, and many teachers were French. At secondary and higher levels, the curriculum was modeled closely on that of France.

The strengthening of ties with France was complemented by a desire to enhance links with other Western countries, includ-

ing Britain, Italy, Switzerland, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), and most notably the United States. In October 1963, the Tsiranana regime consented to the construction of a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) satellite tracking station near the old airport outside the capital. In return, the United States initiated a modest foreign assistance program that guaranteed private investment in the island's economy and made available a number of fellowships to students from Madagascar. Madagascar also established diplomatic links with other newly emerging nations, particularly former French colonies in Africa, and strengthened relationships with Asian countries, most notably Japan, India, and Indonesia.

A significant shift occurred in Madagascar's foreign policy after the downfall of the Tsiranana regime in 1972. In a series of diplomatic moves that three years later were embraced by the Ratsiraka regime as the cornerstones of the Second Republic, the Ramanantsoa regime pronounced Madagascar's commitment to nonalignment, anti-imperialism, anticolonialism, and antiracism in international affairs. In the context of the privileged Franco-Malagasy relationship, these themes translated into harsh rhetoric concerning the necessity of revoking the "slavery agreements" of the Tsiranana regime, followed by the uncompensated nationalization of all French banks and insurance firms in June 1975, contributing to the dramatic cooling of diplomatic relations. Moreover, in June 1976, the Ratsiraka regime laid claim to small, rocky, French-held islands around Madagascar, including the Glorieuses (claimed concurrently by Comoros), Juan de Nova, Europa, Bassas da India, and Tromelin (also claimed by Mauritius). Originally administered as part of French-ruled Madagascar, these possessions were split off just prior to independence in 1960 and include some minor military facilities.

Diplomatic links also soured with other Western powers, such as Britain, which closed its embassy in 1975. In the case of the United States, the immediate cause of strained ties was the Ratsiraka regime's decision to close the NASA tracking station. Another source of friction was the frequent verbal assaults by the Ratsiraka regime against the United States military presence at Diego Garcia Island. The Malagasy position was that, in accordance with a UN resolution passed in 1971, the Indian Ocean should be a demilitarized, nuclear-free zone of peace. Nonetheless, trade relations remained essentially unaffected,

Presidential Palace, Antananarivo
Courtesy J.D. von Pischke

and diplomatic relations continued, albeit at the reduced level of chargés d'affaires.

The most dramatic development was the strengthening of ties with Eastern Europe and with other communist regimes. After establishing diplomatic links with the Soviet Union in October 1972—followed one month later by the establishment of ties with China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)—ties were enhanced in the economic, cultural, and politico-military realms. Soviet development assistance was directed toward the fields of agriculture, medicine, science, and technology, and scholarships were provided to at least 2,000 Malagasy students to study in the Soviet Union. A new Malagasy-Soviet Intergovernmental Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation and Trade facilitated these links. The Soviet Union was particularly interested in promoting security ties with the Ratsiraka regime. In addition to providing military advisers and technical advice, the former Soviet Union became the primary source of military equipment for the Malagasy Armed Forces, including providing access to MiG–21 Fishbed jet fighters, and aided in the construction of a series of sealane intercept stations along Madagascar's west

coast astride the Mozambique Channel. These stations were eventually dismantled in 1983 after protests by the West.

Relationships with other communist countries developed in a variety of fields. Whereas Cuba provided technical assistance within the educational realm, China funded the construction of roads between Moramanga and Toamasina, and built a new sugar factory near Morondava. The Ratsiraka regime was especially impressed by North Korean leader Kim Il Sung and his ideology of national self-reliance known as *juche* (or *chuch'e*), hosting an international conference on this topic in Antananarivo in 1976. North Korean assistance was fairly extensive in the fields of agriculture and irrigation. The North Koreans were most noted, however, for their training of Ratsiraka's presidential security unit and the construction of a presidential bunker at Iavohola.

New directions in foreign policy were equally pronounced in Madagascar's relationships with other developing countries and its positions in a variety of international forums. In addition to breaking ties with Israel and South Africa, the Ramanantsoa/Ratsiraka regimes strengthened links with Libya, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and liberation movements in southern Africa and the Western Sahara. Madagascar also joined the Nonaligned Movement, became more active in the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and took positions in the UN that favored the communist states, including abstaining on a resolution that denounced the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and supporting Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978. In conjunction with his Cuban and Soviet allies, Ratsiraka even tried to broker an end to rising tensions between Marxist Ethiopia and Marxist Somalia just prior to the outbreak of the Ogaden War in 1977–78.

Despite some alarmist projections that the communist countries would replace the West and turn Madagascar into a Soviet satellite, the changes in Madagascar's foreign policies represented a short-term shift rather than a true break with the past. The Ratsiraka regime had gained little in the form of economic assistance from its friendly relations with the Soviet Union and other communist countries—aid from these sources constituted less than 1 percent of all bilateral assistance from 1977 to 1980—and was confronted with the harsh realities of economic decline. As a result, an increasingly pragmatic Ratsiraka sought to reaffirm and strengthen Madagascar's foreign policy relationships with the West. Indeed, relations with the West

appeared to be on the upswing at the beginning of the 1980s, whereas those with the communist countries were more or less static—despite the similarity of views on a wide range of international issues routinely reaffirmed by the spokespersons of Madagascar and of communist countries. As was the case with other self-proclaimed Marxist regimes during the 1970s and the 1980s, Ratsiraka pursued politico-military links with the Soviet Union while seeking to maintain economic ties with the West.

Diplomatic overtures to France served as the logical starting point for achieving a balance in Madagascar's foreign policy relationships. As early as 1977, Ratsiraka provided assurances concerning compensation for French firms nationalized during the mid-1970s in order to foster greater official and private investment in Madagascar. France responded positively, as demonstrated by the tremendous increase in foreign assistance from US$38.4 million in 1979 to US$96.4 million in 1982. Indeed, as of the early 1980s, France remained Madagascar's most important foreign policy partner. It was the principal source of foreign assistance and the most valuable trading partner. The dispute over French control of neighboring islands, although unresolved, had little if any ill effect on Franco-Malagasy relations, mainly because the Ratsiraka regime no longer publicly pressed this issue in international forums. (The motion asking France to cede the islands had been adopted by the UN General Assembly by a ninety-seven to seven vote in 1979 with thirty-six abstentions.)

The diversification of ties, thereby avoiding dependence on any single power, served as another cornerstone of Madagascar's foreign policy initiatives during the 1980s. Relations were fully restored with Washington in November 1980 when United States Ambassador Fernando E. Rondon assumed his post for the first time since his predecessor had been recalled during the summer of 1975. Receiving the new envoy, Ratsiraka expressed the hope that "fruitful, loyal, and lasting cooperation" would develop between the two countries and that there would be "no further misunderstandings" as a result of differing opinions on international issues. Other major events included the reopening of the British embassy in 1979, Ratsiraka's visits with President Ronald Reagan in Washington in 1982 and 1983, the opening of a World Bank office in Antananarivo in 1983, and the strengthening of links with other industrialized countries, most notably Japan.

The levels of foreign assistance provided by the West demonstrate the success of Ratsiraka's diplomatic initiatives (see table 7, Appendix). Bilateral aid from the West constituted only US$36.3 million one year after Ratsiraka had taken power in 1975. Four years after the beginning of the foreign policy changes initiated by the Ramantsoa regime, this amount increased to US$168.1 million in 1982, to US$217.6 million in 1988, and to US$365.5 million in 1991. Similarly, multilateral assistance from Western financial institutions, such as the IMF and the European Common Market (European Union), increased from US$34.1 million in 1976 to US$80.6 million in 1982, to US$108.9 million in 1988, and to US$191.4 million in 1991.

Equally important, Ratsiraka's policies led to a diversification of Madagascar's sources of foreign assistance. Although France in 1991 still provided approximately 43 percent (US$157.0 million) of Madagascar's bilateral foreign assistance, in 1988 it had provided approximately 50 percent (US$108.5 million). The amount marked a significant decline from almost total dependence in 1970 when nearly 90 percent of all Western assistance was provided by France. Noteworthy, however, was France's provision of US$655.4 million of the total US$1,334.5 million multilateral aid that Madagascar received between 1985 and 1990. In addition, France gave Madagascar loan assistance for such projects as telecommunications, transportation, and banking, and canceled US$715 million in debts that the Madagascar government owed France. In 1993 Madagascar received about US$167 million in aid from France compared with about US$152 million in aid received from France in 1992. Whereas the United States provided US$71.0 million in multilateral aid in 1991, Japan and Germany extended US$56.8 million and US$30.3 million respectively.

United States direct development aid has become increasingly important for Madagascar and has risen from about US$10 million in 1990 to US$13.5 million in 1991 (US$28 million was authorized but could not be used because of strikes and the disrupted political and economic situation), US$40 million in 1992, and US$40.6 million in 1993. Of the 1993 total, US$20.4 million was earmarked for environmental protection and US$10 million for the private sector.

The growing partnership with the West was cemented by dramatic changes in the international system and in Madagas-

car's domestic political system. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signaled the beginning of a process eventually leading to the downfall of communist regimes and trading partners in Eastern Europe, the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, and the increasing international isolation of North Korea and Cuba as pariah regimes. Furthermore, this international trend facilitated the rise of popular pressures for a multiparty democracy in Madagascar, eventually leading to the downfall of Ratsiraka's Second Republic and its replacement in 1993 with a democratically inspired Third Republic under the leadership of Zafy.

The cornerstone of Madagascar's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era is the continued diversification of ties, with an emphasis on promoting economic exchanges. In addition to establishing formal diplomatic ties with the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in May 1993, negotiations were initiated to restore diplomatic links with Israel and South Africa. In each of these cases, diplomatic links are perceived as the precursor to lucrative trading agreements. For example, one month after establishing diplomatic ties with South Korea, Madagascar hosted a South Korean trade mission that included representatives of six major South Korean companies: Daewoo, Dong Yong Electronics, Hyundai, Kolon, Peace Industries, and Samsung. As underscored by Prime Minister Ravony, one of the most critical challenges facing Madagascar is the restructuring of its embassies and foreign policy to "objectives of economic redeployment" in the post-Cold War era. Of particular interest to Madagascar, in view of their proximity and commercial potential, are relations and trade with India, Mauritius, Australia, and South Africa.

The benefits associated with changes in the international environment have an impact on Madagascar's domestic political system. Similar to other newly installed African democracies at the beginning of the 1990s, the Zafy regime confronts the challenge of consolidating still-fragile democratic practices and governing institutions in a significantly changed international environment. Although such potential benefits associated with the end of the Cold War as a renewed focus on economic as opposed to military investments have been heralded by Western observers, the leaders of African countries, including Madagascar, rightfully wonder if their countries will be further marginalized as former benefactors either turn inward or toward more lucrative economic markets in Asia and Latin America. Equally important, the Zafy regime faces balancing

rising public demands to receive immediately the fruits of democratization with the harsh reality of the political constraints of a democratic system. Indeed, democratization has not proved to be a quick panacea for resolving such issues as the necessity of overhauling and privatizing largely inert and bloated state-operated economic enterprises, and has even led to the emergence of new problems, most notably federalist demands for greater regional autonomy. Nonetheless, Madagascar's political elite clearly seems committed to the continued reform and strengthening of multiparty democracy, as well as the expansion of the country's role as a leader in both regional and international forums.

* * *

The amount of scholarship devoted to Madagascar in the English language is small but growing, and complements a larger body of literature in the French language and a smaller body of research in the Malagasy language. For the most up-to-date analyses by francophone scholars, see a special 1993 edition of *Politique Africaine* devoted to Madagascar.

Several works offer a useful introduction to the society, economics, and especially the politics of Madagascar. One of the earliest and most useful introductions in English is Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The Malagasy Republic: Madagascar Today.* A more recent introduction, Maureen Covell's *Madagascar: Politics, Economics, and Society,* is especially relevant for understanding the Marxist policies of the Ratsiraka era. Pierre Vérin's *Madagascar* provides the standard French introduction and includes a useful bibliographic essay.

Several scholars have distinguished themselves as specialists on Madagascar, and their works serve as helpful introductions to each of their discipline's treatment of Madagascar. In the field of anthropology, Maurice Bloch has written several seminal works, most notably *Placing the Dead: Tombs, Ancestral Villages, and Kinship Organization in Madagascar* and *From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of the Merina of Madagascar.* In the field of history, Mervyn Brown's *Madagascar Rediscovered: A History from Early Times to Independence* provides a good overview of the early history of Madagascar. Raymond K. Kent's *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar, 1500–1700* outlines the historical development of various Malagasy kingdoms. In the field of economics, Frederic L. Pryor's *Poverty, Equity, and Growth in Malawi and Madagascar* is valuable in

exploring the equity versus growth dilemma as applied to Madagascar. Paul A. Dorosh's *Macroeconomic Adjustment and the Poor: The Case of Madagascar* offers important insights into the impact of national economic policies and their effect on rural populations.

A variety of bulletins and journals are useful for staying apprised of political and economic developments in Madagascar. The separate economic and political monthly bulletins of the *Africa Research Bulletin* contain brief references. Also recommended are the annual country surveys in the *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents* and the *Annuaire des Pays de l'Océan Indien*. However, the *Indian Ocean Newsletter* constitutes the most informative weekly source of up-to-date information on political, and to a lesser degree, economic developments in the African countries and islands in or around the Indian Ocean, including Madagascar. The annual country profiles and the quarterly reports of the Economist Intelligence Unit are vital for understanding trends in the Malagasy economy. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 2. Mauritius

National emblem of Mauritius

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Mauritius.

Short Name: Mauritius.

Term for Citizens: Mauritian(s).

Capital: Port Louis.

Date of Independence: March 12, 1968 (from Britain).

Geography

Size: Approximately 1,865 square kilometers.

Topography: Includes Rodrigues Island, some 600 kilometers east, and some uninhabited coralline islands; Mauritius and Rodrigues part of volcanic chain of Mascarene Islands. Mauritius part of broken ring of mountain ranges (about 18 percent) encircling central tableland (about 25 percent), with low-lying coastal plains (about 46 percent) and coral reefs offshore. Numerous rivers and streams.

Climate: Below about 400-meter level, humid, subtropical climate. Above that level more temperate. Two seasons: hot and wet summer, November through April, including cyclones December through March; cool and dry winter, May through October. Overall average 200 centimeters of rain annually.

Society

Population: In mid-1993 estimated at 1,106,516 with population growth rate of 0.95 percent. Density more than 537 inhabitants per square kilometer.

Ethnic Groups: Constitution recognizes four population categories: Hindus (about 52 percent in 1989), general population (about 29 percent in 1989), Muslims (about 16

percent in 1989), and Sino-Mauritians (about 3 percent in 1989). Ancestors of Hindus and Muslims came from Indian subcontinent; most Sino-Mauritians from Hunan; general category represents all others, including Europeans, Creoles.

Languages: English (official), Creole, French, Hindi, Bhojpuri, and Tamil.

Religion: In 1990 Hindu (49 percent), Christian (27 percent Roman Catholic, 0.5 percent Protestant), Muslim (16 percent, of which 95 percent Sunni), and other (7.5 percent).

Education: Follows British system, free through postsecondary level. University of Mauritius and other postsecondary institutions exist. Overall literacy in 1990: 80 percent; 85 percent for males and 75 percent for females.

Health: Government health services accessible to most of population. In 1994 life expectancy at birth estimated at: 70.5 years overall, 74.6 for females, 66.6 years for males. In 1994 infant mortality 18.4 per 1,000 live births.

Economy

Gross Domestic Product: 1993 estimate US$8.6 billion, with growth rate of 5.5 percent, and inflation rate of 10.5 percent.

Agriculture: Sugar major crop covering more than 90 percent of cultivated land; more than 500,000 tons annually exported under Lomé Convention. Other products: tea, fresh vegetables, tobacco, cut flowers; livestock raising and fishing.

Industry: Industrial development accelerated by establishment of export processing zones (EPZs) in 1971; textiles and wearing apparel main products; efforts at diversification since 1991. Tourism and construction other major industries.

Exports: 1992 EPZ exports estimated at US$1.3 billion; major markets Britain, France, United States, and Germany.

Imports: 1992 imports estimated at US$1.6 billion; major products: manufactured goods, capital equipment, food, petroleum products, chemicals; major sources: France, South

Africa, Britain, and Japan.

Balance of Payments: 1992 trade deficit US$370 million.

Currency and Exchange Rate: 1 Mauritian rupee (MauR) = 100 cents. August 1995 exchange rate US$1.00 = MauR14.43.

Fiscal Year: July 1–June 30.

Fiscal Policy: 1992–94 development plan stressed private sector and free market, aimed at 6 percent annual growth rate.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Highways: In 1984 out of 1,800 kilometers 1,640 paved.

Ports: Port Louis.

Airports: Two of four airports have permanent-surface runways.

Telecommunications: Good, small system using mainly microwave radio relay; more than 48,000 telephones; two radio stations; four television stations; one Indian Ocean International Telecommunications Satellite Corporation (Intelsat) earth station.

Government and Politics

Government: Patterned on British system; political party with majority support in National Assembly chooses prime minister, who selects cabinet. National Assembly has elected representatives from twenty three-member constituencies and one two-member district on Rodrigues. Also eight seats for "best losers": two each for Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, and general population. Mauritius became republic in 1992; president appointed by prime minister and approved by assembly has titular function. Supreme Court heads judicial system, based on Napoleonic Code and English common law. Local government not specified in 1968 constitution, but all councils elected.

Politics: Numerous political parties of which government

consists of coalition of Militant Socialist Movement (MSM), Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM), and several others; opposition led by Mauritian Labor Party (MLP) and Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD).

Foreign Relations: Member of Commonwealth of Nations; has particularly strong relations with Britain, France, India, and, since 1990, South Africa. Mauritius supports Indian Ocean zone of peace; has tension with France over claim to Tromelin Island, 550 kilometers northwest. Some strain in relations with United States because of United States base on Diego Garcia Island. Growing trade relations with Hong Kong, Japan, and China. Member of Organization of African Unity.

National Security

Defense Forces: National Police Force, including paramilitary Special Mobile Force, Special Support Unit, and National Coast Guard.

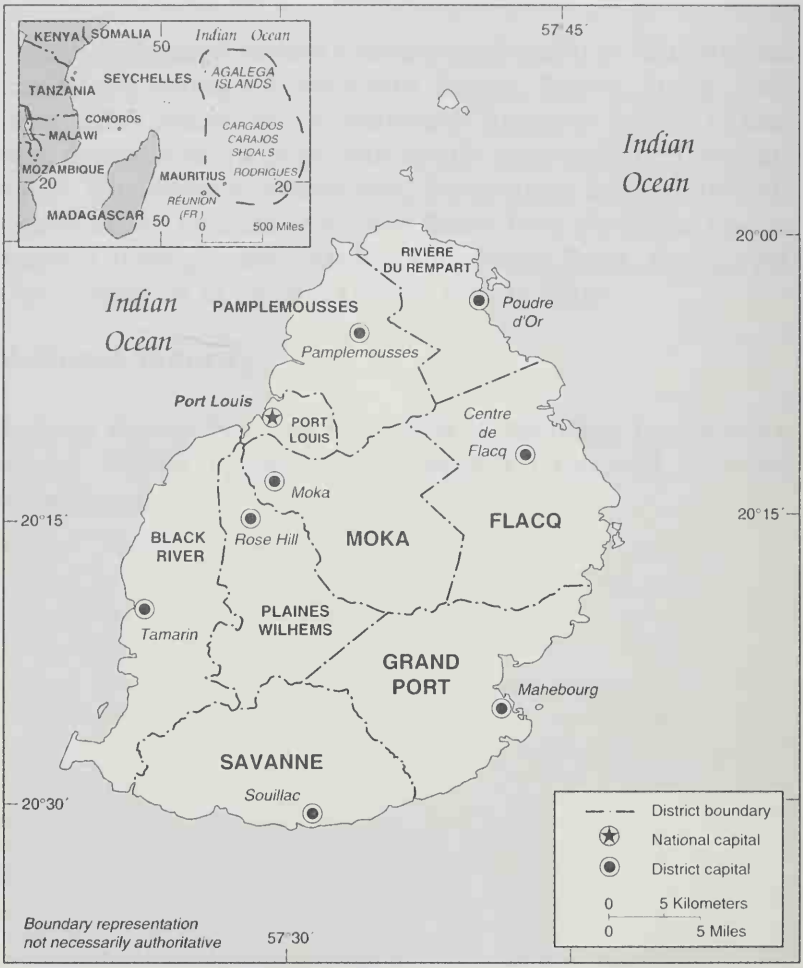


Figure 5. Mauritius: Administrative Divisions, 1994

THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS is a democratic and prosperous country whose entire population has ancestral origins elsewhere: Europe, Africa, India, and China. Until recently, the country's economy was dominated by the production and export of sugar, a legacy of its French and British colonial past. After independence in 1968, government-directed diversification efforts resulted in the rapid growth of tourism and a manufacturing sector producing mainly textiles for export.

During French colonial rule, from 1767 to 1810, the capital and main port, Port Louis, became an important center for trade, privateering, and naval operations against the British. In addition, French planters established sugarcane estates and built up their fortunes at the expense of the labor of slaves brought from Africa. The French patois, or colloquial language, which evolved among these slaves and their freed descendants, referred to as Creole, has become the everyday language shared by most of the island's inhabitants. French is used in the media and literature, and the Franco-Mauritian descendants of the French settlers continue to dominate the sugar industry and economic life of modern Mauritius.

The British captured the island in 1810 and gave up sovereignty when Mauritius became independent in 1968. During this period, the French plantation aristocracy maintained its economic, and, to a certain degree, its political prominence. The British abolished slavery but provided for cheap labor on the sugar estates by bringing nearly 500,000 indentured workers from the Indian subcontinent. The political history of Mauritius in the twentieth century revolves around the gradual economic and political empowerment of the island's Indian majority.

Mauritian independence was not gained without opposition and violence. Tensions were particularly marked between the Creole and Indian communities, which clashed often at election time, when the rising fortunes of the latter at the expense of the former were most apparent. Nonetheless, successive governments have, with varying success, attempted to work out a peaceful modus vivendi that considers the concerns of the island's myriad communities.

These varied interests have contributed to a political culture that is occasionally volatile and highly fluid, characterized by

shifting alliances. A notable lapse from democratic practices, however, occurred in 1971. The Mauritius Labor Party (MLP)-led coalition government of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, faced with the radical and popular challenge of the Mauritian Militant Movement (Mouvement Militant Mauricien—MMM) and its allies in the unions, promulgated the Public Order Act, which banned many forms of political activity. This state of emergency lasted until 1976. The resilience and stability of Mauritian society, however, were demonstrated by the fact that an MMM-led government eventually gained power through the ballot box in 1982.

Despite many differences, the major political parties have worked successfully toward the country's economic welfare. For this reason, Mauritius has evolved from a primarily agricultural monocrop economy marked by high unemployment, low salaries, and boom-or-bust cycles to one dominated by manufacturing, tourism, and expanding financial services. As Mauritius faces the future, it can look back on its dazzling economic performance in the 1980s and attempt to build on that success by continuing its tradition of political stability, foresight, and prudent development planning.

Historical Setting

Early Settlement

Although there is no evidence of human habitation on Mauritius before the early seventeenth century, Phoenicians probably visited the island about 2,000 years ago, and Malays and Arabs stopped on the island in subsequent centuries. The Portuguese charted the waters surrounding the island, which they called Ilha do Cirne (Island of the Swan), in the early sixteenth century. In 1638 the Dutch began colonizing the island, which they named after Maurice of Nassau, the *stadthouder* (head of state) of Holland. The island's first governor, Cornelius Simonsz Gooyer, presided over a small population of Dutch convicts and slaves from Indonesia and Madagascar, who sought to export ambergris, ebony, and other resources. After twenty years, the colony failed, as did a second settlement established in 1664. Poor administration and harsh conditions forced the Dutch to withdraw permanently by 1710. In addition to presiding over the extinction of the dodo bird and leaving behind perhaps some runaway slaves, swarms of rats, and ravaged

ebony forests, the Dutch introduced a plant that was to be prominent in the island's future—sugarcane.

French efforts to colonize the area were more successful. Around 1638 they had taken the islands of Rodrigues and Reunion, and in 1715 an expedition of the French East India Company claimed Mauritius for France. The company established a settlement named Île de France on the island in 1722. The company ruled until 1764, when, after a series of inept governors and the bankruptcy of the company, Mauritius became a crown colony administered by the home government. One exception among the early company governors was Mahé de la Bourdonnais, who is still celebrated among Mauritians. During his tenure from 1735 to 1746, he presided over many improvements to the island's infrastructure and promoted its economic development. He made Mauritius the seat of government for all French territories in the region, built up Port Louis, and strengthened the sugar industry by building the island's first sugar refinery. He also brought the first Indian immigrants, who worked as artisans in the port city.

Under French government rule, between 1764 and 1810, Port Louis gained prestige and wealth. The island's population increased, and its planters grew rich. Agricultural prosperity was achieved by exploiting cheap slave labor. Between 1767 and 1797, the population reached 59,000 inhabitants, including 6,200 whites, 3,700 free persons, and 49,100 slaves; the population in each category more than doubled during the period. Although the island's elite culture was distinctly French, its social structure became more complex as the population grew. Port Louis, open to free trade after the demise of the French East India Company, saw a major increase in shipping, especially from Europe and North America. For example, from 1786 to 1810 almost 600 ships from the United States called on Mauritius, and the United States established a consulate in Port Louis in 1794. Privateering was an even greater boon to the economy.

News of the French Revolution reached Mauritius in 1790, prompting settlers unhappy with royal administration to establish more representative forms of government: a colonial assembly and municipal councils. When a squadron arrived three years later, however, to enforce the new French government's abolition of slavery, the settlers turned the squadron back. Napoleon sent a new governor to the island in 1803, resulting in the dissolution of the assembly and councils. The

waning of French hegemony in the region permitted a British force of 10,000, carried from the Indian subcontinent by a fleet of seventy ships, to land on Mauritius in 1810. The French capitulated to the British, but the British agreed to leave in place existing legal and administrative structures. The 1814 Treaty of Paris awarded the island, together with the Seychelles and Rodrigues islands, to Britain. English became the official language, but French and Creole dominated. Few British immigrants came to the colony.

The plantation-owning Mauritians of French origin (Franco-Mauritians) resisted British attempts to eradicate slavery. Finally, after much investigation, petitioning, and subterfuge, the authorities abolished slavery in 1835. Plantation owners won several concessions from the government, however, including a payment of 2.1 million pounds sterling and laws obliging freed slaves to remain on their former owner's land as "apprentices" for six years. Widespread desertions by "apprentices" forced the abolition of the laws in 1838, two years before schedule, and created a severe labor shortage.

Rise of the Sugar Economy

Under the British, Mauritius was no longer a free port. To compensate for the resulting loss in trade, the government encouraged sugar production. In 1825 Britain equalized the duty on sugar from all of its colonies, providing a strong stimulus for Mauritians to produce more sugar. Production leaped from 11,000 tons in 1825 to 21,000 tons in 1826; by 1854 production exceeded 100,000 tons. By the mid-nineteenth century, Mauritius had reached the apex of its importance in the world sugar market: it was Britain's main sugar-producing colony and produced 9.4 percent of the world's sugarcane between 1855 and 1859. Although overall production would continue to rise into the twentieth century, declines in world prices and a massive increase in production in other countries robbed Mauritius of its dominant role in subsequent years. Nonetheless, as sugar increased in economic importance, the percentage of food crop production dropped accordingly, and landownership became concentrated in large, profitable estates.

Indentured workers from India replaced slaves as a source of cheap labor for the sugar plantations. Between 1834 and 1910 (the last year of arrivals), 451,776 Indians migrated to Mauritius, the majority arriving before 1865. Because 157,639

Statue of Mahé de la Bourdonnais, an early governor appointed by the French East India Company, in Port Louis, the capital
Courtesy Mari G. Borstelmann

of these Indians left, the island had a net gain of 294,137 Indians during the period. Most workers came from Bengal and Madras, under contract to work for at least ten years for low wages under harsh conditions. At the end of their contracts, workers supposedly had the option of returning home, but plantation owners often succeeded in eliminating this choice. Many plantation owners punished workers with beatings, hunted down those who ran away and imprisoned them, and unjustly withheld pay. In 1878 a labor law regularized the pay system, and in 1917 the indenture system formally ended. Moreover, a 1922 law permitted workers to choose their places of work.

By 1871 more than 68 percent of the population was Indian, of which more than 25 percent had been born in Mauritius. In 1931 the proportion of Indians in the population was the same, but more than 93 percent of them were natives. By contrast, Mauritius had no immigration from Africa. The freed slaves and their Creole offspring left the plantations to become fishers, dockworkers, and civil servants and formed about 20 percent of the population in 1931. A number of Chinese

immigrated during the nineteenth century, and this group made up about 2 percent of the population in 1931.

Starting in the 1860s, the island's sugar economy declined in the face of varied pressures. As sugar beet production and sugarcane production in other countries increased, world prices declined. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 shifted trade routes away from the Indian Ocean. And, in addition to regularly occurring droughts and cyclones, a deadly malaria epidemic killed more than 40,000 people between 1867 and 1869. The Franco-Mauritian plantation owners responded in several ways. They cut costs by centralizing sugar production in fewer factories. Furthermore, to increase the profitability of their operations, from the 1870s to about 1920 the planters sold the less productive portions of their landholdings. The process was known as the *grand morcellement*, and it permitted many Indians who could put together enough capital to become small landowners. This meant that for the first time, sugar was produced on small plots with free labor. Between 1864 and 1900, according to one scholar, Indians purchased 24 million rupees worth of land. The Indian rupee became the island's official currency in 1876. By 1921 Indians owned about 35 percent of the island's cultivated land.

British Colonial Rule

Colonial rule amounted to a thin layer of British administrative and judicial officials attempting to preside over an assertive and powerful Franco-Mauritian elite. Although many members of this elite derived their status and wealth from owning plantations, some were senior police officials and magistrates. Below the Franco-Mauritians on the ladder of social status were the Creoles, descendants of African slaves, some of mixed white descent, who tended to be francophone and generally supportive of the Franco-Mauritians. In the nineteenth century, Indians were at the bottom of the social ladder until their economic opportunities broadened.

In 1831 the British introduced a constitution that provided for a Council of Government whose seven members were nominated by the governor. In an effort to win the support of the Franco-Mauritians, who wanted a greater voice in government, Governor John Pope-Hennessy expanded the council to include ten elected members from nine electoral districts in the constitution of 1886. The franchise was limited to wealthy property owners, who constituted a scant 2 percent of the adult population. Elected municipal councils also appeared in the

nineteenth century, first in Port Louis and then in four other major towns. The British established district councils at the end of the nineteenth century. By 1907 the Creole middle class, led by Dr. Eugene Laurent, formed Liberal Action (Action Libérale), which sought to open up political and economic opportunities for themselves. Although it won Port Louis in the 1911 elections against the Oligarchs, Liberal Action dissolved shortly thereafter.

The Indo-Mauritians, who included both Hindus and Muslims, became active in the early twentieth century, thanks in part to the work of a lawyer from India named Manilal Maganlall Doctor. Sent to Mauritius in 1907 at the behest of Mohandas Gandhi (known as Mahatma Gandhi), Manilal was a tireless and eloquent proponent of Indian rights. He sought to inculcate a sense of self-respect in the community by teaching Mauritian Indians about their heritage, and he defended them in the courts against unscrupulous employers. Manilal also founded the *Hindustani*, a newspaper that expressed the concerns of the Indian community.

In 1926 the first Indo-Mauritians were elected to the government council. This small victory, however, did not lead to better conditions in the community. Despite incremental improvements in contracts, wages, and working conditions on the sugar plantations and in processing plants, the work was as hard and daily life as precarious as they had been 100 years earlier. In addition, the boom-or-bust nature of the world sugar economy meant that only the upper classes were insulated from hardship during periods of low world demand. Dissatisfaction on the part of Indian workers and small planters sparked widespread rioting on Mauritius in 1937 and 1943, and a strike in 1938.

During this period, Indian and Creole Mauritians formed several organizations aimed at improving labor laws and introducing political reforms. Dr. Maurice Curé, a noted Creole politician, founded the MLP in 1936. The party attracted urban Creole workers and rural Indian farmers. Another important group was the Indian Cultural Association, and a notable member of this group was Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who would become the country's first prime minister.

Toward Independence

After World War II, the pace of constitutional reform quickened as Britain began to loosen its grip on its colonies. In Mauritius this transformation was presided over by Donald

Mackenzie Kennedy, governor from 1942 to 1949. A consultative committee, which for the first time included representatives of all Mauritian communities, made suggestions for a new constitution. In addition to providing for a Legislative Council that was more representative, the new constitution expanded the franchise in 1947 to all adults able to write their names in any of the island's languages. In the 1948 election, eleven of the nineteen candidates winning seats in the Legislative Council were Hindu. However, Governor Mackenzie Kennedy assured the dominance of British and Franco-Mauritian interests by nominating twelve conservatives to the body—some seats were appointed and others elected. This tactic was repeated after the 1953 election by Sir Hilary Blood, the new governor.

A new constitution in 1958 included several changes that increased political participation. It provided for suffrage to adults over twenty-one years of age and divided the country into forty single-member constituencies that elected representatives to the Legislative Council. Also, to assure representation of more constituencies, the constitution allowed the governor to appoint to the council "best losers," candidates whose support was not quite enough to win their races. In the 1959 election, the MLP won twenty-three seats, the Independent Forward Block (IFB) five, the Committee for Muslim Action (Comité d'Action Musulmane—CAM) five, the Mauritian Party (Parti Mauricien—PM) three, and Independents three. The governor awarded best-loser seats to the PM and to Chinese candidates.

After negotiations among the major parties in 1961, the British decided that the winning party's leader in the 1963 election would become premier. In addition, the Legislative Council would become the Legislative Assembly, and the Executive Committee would become the Council of Ministers. The new government would be responsible for all but the island's defense, internal security, and foreign affairs. Although the PM leader, Gaetan Duval, put up strong competition, the MLP, under Ramgoolam, won the election with nineteen seats. Leery that a Hindu victory would jeopardize its economic position, the Creole community expressed unease and opposition in May 1965 riots that left several dead.

A constitutional conference held in London in 1965, with members of all political parties present, decided that the island should become independent from Britain as soon as general

elections returned a party in favor of such a notion. Some parties, however, opposed independence. The Franco-Mauritian community and many of the island's Creoles backed the Mauritian Social Democratic Party (Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate—PMSD, formerly the PM), which strongly advocated continued "free association" with Britain. The PMSD representatives walked out of the constitutional conference when it became apparent that one price for independence would be the incorporation of the Chagos Archipelago (formerly administered from Mauritius) into the planned British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) along with portions of Seychelles. Other conferees, represented by the CAM, feared that their constituents would be placed at a disadvantage. In the end, the CAM joined the MLP and the IFB to form the winning coalition in the decisive general election of August 7, 1967. A Commonwealth of Nations observer team was satisfied that the highly participatory election was fair. The winning coalition took thirty-nine of the sixty-two seats in the assembly.

Independent Mauritius

On August 22, 1967, Prime Minister Ramgoolam moved that the assembly request independence according to arrangements made previously with Britain. The new nation came into being on March 12, 1968, as an independent member of the Commonwealth.

Over the years, some elections have been marked by ethnic discord; voting in 1948, 1953, 1959, and 1967, for example, was split roughly along ethnic lines. The Indo-Mauritian majority gained progressively at the expense of other groups as suffrage was extended. More significant was the ethnic rioting in 1964 and 1968. In May 1964, Hindu and Creole communities clashed in the village of Trois Boutiques, outside Souillac. One police officer and one Franco-Mauritian were killed. In early 1968, just six weeks before independence, violence between Creoles and Muslims in the nation's capital left at least twenty-five people dead and hundreds injured before British troops quelled the fighting.

Most Mauritians deplored these outbreaks of violence, and the government responded to both by declaring a state of emergency. One consequence of the unrest was an amendment to the constitution in 1969 extending the first parliament to 1976. Another effect was the entry of the PMSD into the ruling

coalition, and the departure of the IFB to form a small opposition party.

Social and economic conditions after World War II contributed to the political conflicts. As the provision of health, education, pension, and other public welfare services expanded, expectations began to rise. The eradication of malaria and parasitic diseases in the 1940s and 1950s improved the life expectancy of the poor and helped fuel a population increase of 3 percent per year. Family planning measures reduced the population growth rate in the 1960s and 1970s, but the labor force continued to increase rapidly. Registered unemployment stood at more than 12 percent of the work force on the eve of independence.

The unemployed, especially the youth, rallied behind a new political party, the MMM, formed in 1969. Its organizers were Paul Bérenger (a Franco-Mauritian), Dev Virahsawmy (a Telegu speaker), and Jooneed Jeerooburkhan (a Muslim). They appealed to poor and working-class Mauritians of all backgrounds with their radical program of socialist change. An early show of strength for the party was a by-election victory in the prime minister's district in 1970. With widespread union support, the MMM called a number of debilitating strikes in 1971, demanding better benefits for workers and elections by 1972, the year previously mandated. Four PMSD members made attempts on the lives of Virahsawmy and Bérenger in November 1971. The authorities placed many of the party's leadership and rank and file in jail under the Public Order Act of 1971. The government also banned political meetings, suspended twelve unions, and closed *Le Militant*, the MMM newspaper. The government extended the state of emergency until 1976, proscribing most political opposition.

The MMM succeeded in placing the issue of job creation high on the list of priorities for the country's first economic development plan, covering 1971–75. The plan called for additional jobs in manufacturing and in agriculture outside sugar production. It also initiated a program called Work for All (Travail pour Tous), which created the Development Works Corporation (DWC) to hire laborers for public construction and relief projects. These policies, high sugar prices, growth in tourism, and the success of the newly created export processing zones (EPZs) helped reduce the unemployment rate to 7 percent by 1976.

The slow economic progress enabled the MMM to make significant gains in the closely fought 1976 general elections; the party won 40 percent of the vote and thirty-four of the seventy assembly seats. Part of the MMM's success came from the lowering of the voting age to eighteen in 1975, which allowed the party to garner the youth vote across ethnic lines. In addition, the ruling coalition hurt itself by nominating incompetent and corrupt candidates, failing to win the support of trade unions, and maintaining unpopular positions regarding the Chagos Archipelago and the United States military presence on Diego Garcia. (The MMM favored returning to Mauritian sovereignty the Chagos Archipelago, of which Diego Garcia was a part.)

The MLP and the PMSD, both of which had declined in popularity since the previous election, formed a coalition government to lock the MMM out of power. This government was plagued by internal division: MLP chief whip Harish Boodhoo broke off to form the Mauritian Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste Mauricien—PSM). In addition, the government suffered from political corruption scandals, poor economic performance, and the destructive effects of cyclones each year from 1979 to 1981. These and other factors were instrumental in the 1982 electoral victory of a new MMM-PSM coalition. In a concession to Hindu political sensibilities, Anerood Jugnauth was named prime minister. Paul Bérenger served as minister of finance. Faced with the realities of governing the country, including heavy obligations to the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary) and the World Bank (see Glossary), the government backed away from the radical policies the MMM espoused when it was in opposition. It succeeded in expanding regional cooperation abroad and worked at modest nationalization and job creation at home. The ruling coalition broke up in less than a year, however, and new elections were held in August 1983.

Prime Minister Jugnauth founded a new party, the Militant Socialist Movement (Mouvement Socialiste Militant), subsequently renamed the Mauritian Socialist Movement (Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien—MSM) after combining with the PSM. The MSM joined during the 1983 election with the MLP and the PMSD to win comfortably. In 1984 some MLP members fell out with the government after several MLP ministers were dismissed. Those MLP members who stayed in the ruling coalition, called the Alliance, formed the Assembly of Mauritian Workers (Rassemblement des Travaillistes Mauriciens—

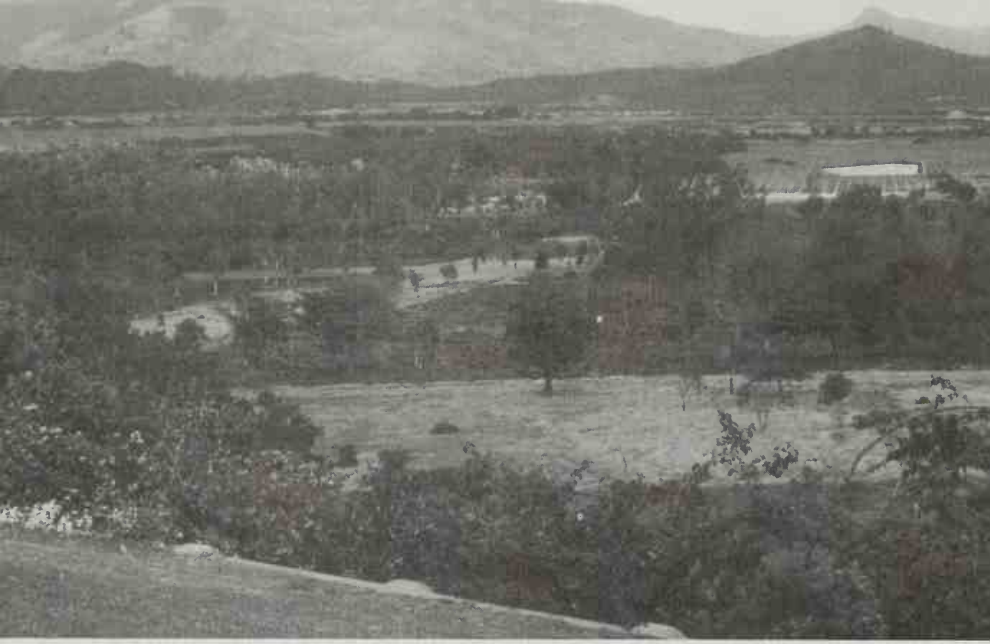
RTM). In December 1985, however, the government suffered several setbacks that would trouble it for many months to come: MMM municipal election victories; the death of Ramgoolam, a close adviser to Jugnauth and a respected figure in national politics; and a drug scandal involving four Alliance deputies caught with twenty-one kilograms of heroin at the Amsterdam airport. In a surprising electoral victory in 1987, the Alliance retained power, thanks in large part to Jugnauth's handling of the economy. The MMM, under the leadership of Dr. Prem Nababsing, won twenty-one seats and was allotted three best-loser seats.

Beginning with the PMSD's defection in August 1988, the Alliance began to unravel. The MSM thwarted the growing political threat posed by a resurgent MLP by forging an alliance with the MMM, built in part on the promise of making Mauritius a republic. The MSM/MMM coalition won a convincing victory in September 1991 and quickly passed changes in the constitution that led to the declaration of Mauritius as a republic in March 1992.

Physical Environment

Geography

The island of Mauritius lies about 800 kilometers east of Madagascar between longitudes 57°18' and 57°49' east, and latitudes 19°59' and 20°32' south. Pearl-shaped, it is sixty-one kilometers long and forty-six kilometers wide at the extremes and has a total land area of some 1,865 square kilometers—about the size of Rhode Island. Mauritian territory also incorporates the island of Rodrigues, some 600 kilometers to the east, which is 119 square kilometers in area. Two tiny dependencies to the north of Mauritius, the Agalega Islands and the Cargados Carajos Shoals (also known as the St. Brandon Rocks), are unpopulated (see fig. 5). Nonetheless, their location permits the nation's exclusive economic zone (EEZ—see Glossary) to cover about 1.2 million square kilometers of the Indian Ocean. Just off the Mauritian coast lie some twenty uninhabited islands. Mauritius and France both claim sovereignty over Tromelin, 483 kilometers to the northwest. Mauritius sought to regain sovereignty, lost just before independence in 1968, over the Chagos Archipelago (1,931 kilometers to the northeast), which includes the Diego Garcia atoll.



Mountain view in Mauritius
Courtesy Mari G. Borstelmann

Mauritius and Rodrigues are part of the Mascarene Islands, a chain of volcanic islands that include Reunion, the nation's nearest neighbor at 145 kilometers to the southwest and governed as an overseas territory (*département*) of France. The islands are perched on submarine ridges, including the Mascarene Plateau, which runs for some 3,000 kilometers in an arc bowed outward from the African mainland, and the Rodrigues Fracture Zone, which ripples eastward and connects this underwater plateau with the massive Mid-Indian Ridge.

Mauritius is relatively young geologically, having been created by volcanic activity some 12 million years ago. There has been no active volcano on the island for more than 100,000 years. The island consists of a broken ring of mountain ranges, some 600 to 800 meters above sea level, encircling a central tableland that slopes from a level of 300 meters in the north to 600 meters in the southwest. The mountains are surrounded by low-lying, sometimes hilly, coastal plains, except in the southwest where the drop-off is precipitous. The mountains are steepest toward the center of the island and are probably the tips of the eroded original shield volcano. The sea has built up a ring of coral reefs around most of the 160 kilometers of coastline, which form many shallow lagoons, white coral sand

beaches, and dunes. Two of the best harbors are Port Louis and Mahébourg. Politically, the island is divided into eight administrative divisions called districts and one municipality where the capital, Port Louis, is located.

Lowland plains and gently undulating slopes cover about 46 percent of the total land area. Low-lying plains make up most of the Pamplemousses, Rivière du Rempart, and Flacq districts; southern Grand Port District; the heavily populated northwestern section of Plaines Wilhems District from Beau Bassin to Quatre Bornes and to the sea; and smaller areas around Chemin Grenier. These areas are planted with sugarcane and mixed vegetable crops. The districts of Port Louis and Black River and the more hilly interior plains leading up to the tableland support tea, rice, and sugarcane cultivation and include areas of savanna and scrub forest.

The central tableland covers about a quarter of the island. A large plateau spans most of the districts of Moka, eastern Plaines Wilhems, and western Grand Port, where mostly sugarcane and vegetables are harvested, except around Curepipe and Vacoas, where tea is grown. The southern part of the tableland—in the districts of Black River, Savanne, and southern Plaines Wilhems—is much smaller and heavily dissected with a diverse topography. It contains tea and forest plantations, including reserves of indigenous trees.

Mountains cover about 18 percent of the terrain. The Moka-Long Mountain Range is situated in the northwest near Port Louis, and its highest peak is Pieter Both (823 meters). The Rivière Noire Mountains and Savanne Mountains are in the west and southwest, where Mont Piton of the Petite Rivière Noire (828 meters) is the highest point on the island. The mountains are broken into four ridges that produce deep valleys, gorges, and waterfalls. The Grand Port Range lies in the east, and to its north are the isolated Mont Blanche (520 meters) and Fayences Mountain (425 meters).

Rivers and streams dot the island; many of them are formed in the crevices between land created by new and old lava flows. Drainage radiates from the central tableland to the sea, and many rivers are steeply graded with rapids and falls. Torrential flows are common during storms and cyclones. Marshes and ponds lie in the tableland and on the coastal plain, but the country has only two natural lakes, both crater lakes. The largest of several man-made reservoirs is the Mare aux Vacoas.

Rodrigues Island was formed earlier than Mauritius, but in a similar fashion. It sits lengthwise on an east-west axis, along which runs a spine-like mountain range some 600 meters above sea level. The north-south spurs of these mountains cut deep crevices into the terrain.

The other dependencies of Mauritius are coralline rather than volcanic islands. The two Agalega islands are connected by a sandbar and covered with coconut palms. The Cargados Carajos Shoals are a group of more than twenty islands, none more than one square kilometer in area, which are primarily fishing stations.

Climate

Mauritius has two kinds of climate. Below the 400-meter level on most of the windward (southeastern) side of the island and below 450 meters on the leeward side, a humid, subtropical climate prevails. Above these altitudes, the climate is more temperate, but there is no sharp break, and variations in exposure, altitude, and distance from the sea produce a wide range of patterns. The island has two seasons. The hot and wet summer lasts from November through April. February is the warmest month with temperatures averaging 27°C in the lowlands and 22°C on the plateau. Cyclones occur from December through March, and the storms, which come from the northeast, have caused much destruction on the island over the years. For example, Cyclone Hollanda hit Mauritius February 10, 1994, leaving 1,400 persons homeless, and damaging 60 percent of the electrical system and 50 percent of the telephone network, as well as destroying between 20 and 30 percent of the sugarcane plantations. The overall cost of this cyclone was estimated at US$81 million.

Winter, lasting from May through October, is cool and dry, influenced by the steady southeasterly trade winds. July is the coolest month and has average temperatures of 22°C in the lowlands and 16°C in the plateau. Rainfall is abundant, ranging from 90 centimeters per year in the western lowlands to 500 centimeters in the tableland—an average of 200 centimeters per year overall. Nonetheless, the high rate of evaporation and uneven distribution necessitate irrigation. Humidity is frequently above 80 percent.

Mauritius has fertile soil that supports a variety of vegetation. All but 1 percent of the native hardwood forests that once covered most of the island have been cut down, threatening

the survival of several bird species. Sugarcane is now the dominant crop, covering half the arable land, but other cash and food crops are grown as well. Coral reefs and marine life off the northwest coast have been hurt by pollution, mainly from large hotels. To prevent the destruction caused by rapid and poorly planned development and in response to foreign criticism for its lack of environmental protection, the government established the Ministry of the Environment in 1990. In July 1991, the legislature passed the Environmental Protection Act, which requires an environmental impact assessment for all new projects. The ministry has also established standards for existing industry, followed by inspections. Steps are being taken to induce the construction industry to shift from the use of coral sand (in the early 1990s, the building trade used 600,000 tons of coral sand annually) to basaltic sand. Marine parks are being zoned to protect coral and marine life, and a sewerage master plan is being developed to prevent the discharge of untreated sewage into the ocean. Solid waste management is upgrading the handling of waste, and the principle of "the polluter must pay" is being introduced.

Society and Culture

Population and Demography

The estimated population of Mauritius in July 1993 was 1,106,516 with a population growth rate of 0.95 percent for 1993. According to the 1990 census, the population was 1,065,988, of whom 34,292 lived on Rodrigues and 170 on outer islands. The country's population density, more than 537 inhabitants per square kilometer, is one of the highest in the world. The majority of the island's inhabitants are young; some 58.6 percent were under the age of twenty-nine in 1990. The capital, Port Louis, is the largest city, with a population of 142,645. Other large metropolitan areas, in descending order, are Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, Vacoas-Phoenix, Curepipe, and Quatre Bornes. In 1991 the population was relatively evenly divided between those residing in rural and urban areas.

The rate of population increase grew to between 3 percent and 4 percent in the 1950s, resulting, in large part, from the elimination of malaria, higher living standards, and improved health care. Worried that such high growth rates would impede the island's development and tax its resources, the government and private groups instituted extensive family planning efforts.

Family planning services were centralized under the administration of the Maternal and Child Health Care Division of the Ministry of Health in 1972, and together with the non-governmental Action Familiale, which promoted natural techniques of birth control, reduced the country's birthrate significantly. The rate dropped to around 2 percent in the 1960s, and fell to 1.1 percent in 1973. In the 1980s, the rate fell below 1 percent. According to a Ministry of Health publication, the following methods of birth control were used in 1985: birth control pills, 40 percent; barrier methods, 21 percent; natural methods, 16 percent; intrauterine device (IUD), 10 percent; tubal ligation, 8 percent; Depo Provera, 5 percent. Abortion is illegal, but a Mauritian family planning official has estimated that there is one abortion for every live birth. The crude birthrate in 1991 was 20.7 births per 1,000 population, and the crude death rate stood at 6.6 per 1,000.

Ethnicity, Religion, and Language

The forebears of the various ethnic groups composing Mauritian society arrived as settlers, slaves, indentured laborers, and immigrants. Although the country's past contains dark chapters of inequality and exploitation, modern Mauritian history has been remarkable for its relatively smooth and peaceful transition from colonial rule and the rule of large plantation owners to multiparty democracy.

"Harmonious separatism" is the way in which one writer characterizes communal relations in Mauritius. The term, however, does not preclude the existence of tensions. Ethnicity, religion, and language have been important factors in shaping the way Mauritians relate to each other in the political and social spheres. And despite the fact that sectarian factors are less of a determining factor in people's social and political behavior, they remain an important clue to the people's past and self-identity.

The 1968 constitution recognized four population categories: Hindus, Muslims, Sino-Mauritians, and the general population. According to a 1989 estimate, of a total population of 1,080,000, Hindus constituted about 52 percent (559,440); the general population, about 29 percent (309,960); Muslims, about 16 percent (179,280); and Sino-Mauritians, about 3 percent (31,320).

The ancestors of the Hindu and Muslim populations came predominantly from the Indian subcontinent, and, from the

censuses of 1846 to 1952, were classified as "Indo-Mauritians." The ancestral language of most Hindus is Hindi or Bhojpuri, with a minority of Tamil or Telegu speakers. Hindu immigrants brought with them the caste system. Upon arrival on the island, many members of lower castes upgraded their status to join the Vaish middle caste. Although the caste system was not supported by the occupational structure as in India, minority members of the high Brahmin and Khsatriya castes sometimes joined with the Vaish to exclude lower castes from top civil service and political jobs. For the most part, however, the caste system is not an important factor in social organization and, if anything, lingers mainly as a basis for choosing spouses. Most of the Hindu population adheres to the orthodox rituals of the Sanatanist branch of the religion. These Hindus observe their rituals in rural community centers called *baitkas*. The Arya Samajists adhere to a reform branch of Hinduism popular with the lower classes and instrumental in the Indo-Mauritian community's political and cultural development in the early years of the twentieth century.

The Muslim population is approximately 95 percent Sunni and Hindi-speaking. Other languages include Bhojpuri, Gujarati, Urdu, and Arabic. The principal place of worship is the Jummah Mosque in Port Louis, but there are many smaller mosques in the towns and villages. Among the Shia (see Glossary) minority, some have their origins in different parts of India, others are adherents of the Agha Khan from East Africa, and still others are Ahmadists from the Punjab.

The earliest Chinese immigrants to the island came from the Canton region and spoke Cantonese, but most Sino-Mauritians descend from Mandarin-speaking settlers from Hunan. Some adhere to Buddhism and other Chinese religions, but many converted to Roman Catholicism in the twentieth century.

Unlike members of these specific population categories, those grouped under the general population rubric do not share close ethnic and cultural bonds. Members of the general population have in common only the fact that they do not belong to the other three groups. This category includes Franco-Mauritians, other European immigrants, and Creoles. The Creoles are ethnically diverse, some with black African ancestry, others of mixed descent, and still others from parts of Asia. They share a common language, which is a patois based on French, and the Roman Catholic religion.

In the past, a close association existed between certain occupations and ethnic groups. Although these patterns persist, they are changing. The Chinese, for example, predominate in commerce, as store owners and assistants, and in the restaurant and casino businesses. Hindus form the majority of agricultural workers, and members of the Muslim and Creole populations are artisans. African Creoles tend to be dockworkers, fishers, transportation workers, or service employees. Franco-Mauritians dominate the sugar industry and own most of the hotels, banks, and manufacturing industries. The civil service attracts educated members of all groups.

Mauritian society is noteworthy for its high degree of religious tolerance. Mauritians often share in the observances of religious groups other than their own. In part as a result of the multiplicity of religions, Mauritius has more than twenty national holidays. In addition, the government grants subsidies to all major religious groups according to their membership. According to the 1990 census, 49 percent of the population was Hindu, 27 percent Roman Catholic, 16 percent Muslim, and 0.5 percent Protestant; 7.5 percent belonged to other groups.

Language is perhaps the most complex and perplexing aspect of the Mauritian social mosaic. This intricacy derives from the number of languages spoken, combined with the uses to which they are put and the sociopolitical connotations they bear. Philip Baker and Peter Stein, scholars studying language use in Mauritius, have found that English is associated with "knowledge," French with "culture," Creole with "egalitarianism," and other languages with "ancestral heritage." Consequently, although Creole is the most widely spoken language in the country, French predominates in the media, and English is the official language of government and school instruction.

The growing use of Creole by non-Creole Mauritians reflects a widespread movement away from ethnically based language use. Among Muslims and Sino-Mauritians, for example, Creole is the principal language. According to the 1983 census, the top five languages were: Creole, 54.1 percent; Bhojpuri, 20.4 percent; Hindi, 11.5 percent; French, 3.7 percent; and Tamil, 3.7 percent. These figures indicate the principal language used in the home. Most Mauritians, however, speak several languages.

Education

The education system in Mauritius, patterned after the British model, has improved greatly since independence. It has

been free through the secondary level since 1976 and through the postsecondary level since 1988. The government has made an effort to provide adequate funding for education, occasionally straining tight budgets. In 1991–92, reflecting the trend of earlier budgets, the government allocated 13 percent (Mauritian rupee—MauR; see Glossary—1.5 billion) for education, culture, and art. Nonetheless, facilities in rural areas tend to be less adequate than those in Port Louis and other cities. Literacy in 1990 for the population over fifteen years of age on the island of Mauritius was 80 percent overall, 85 percent for males, and 75 percent for females.

In 1979 the government established a new unit in the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs to oversee and coordinate teaching resources at some 900 private preschools. The increasing participation of women in the labor force necessitated the expansion of the preschool system. The government established public preschools in 1984. Primary education (standard 1–6) is compulsory, and 6,507 teachers taught 137,491 students in 283 schools in 1990, representing an estimated 92 percent of children in that age-group. During the same period at the secondary level (forms 1–6), 3,728 teachers taught 78,110 students in 124 schools. As in the British system, students must pass standardized exams at several stages to be able to continue their studies. About 50 to 60 percent of primary students pass the exam for admission to secondary school. In 1986, 60.7 percent of the form 5 students taking the School Certificate exam passed; not all went on to form 6. In the same year, 53.7 percent of the form 6 students taking the Higher School Certificate exam passed. In addition to government schools, there are many private primary and secondary schools, but statistical data on these are lacking.

The country's principal institution of higher education is the University of Mauritius, where 1,190 students were enrolled in 1991. Other postsecondary institutions include the Mauritius Institute of Education for teacher training; the Mauritius College of the Air, which broadcasts classes; and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute. Of the several hundred Mauritians studying abroad each year, most go to Britain, France, and India. In addition, 1,190 students were enrolled at eleven vocational training centers, and 690 were taking courses at three technical institutions and five handicraft training centers in 1991.

From standard 4 onward, English is the sole language of instruction. Before that, teachers use Creole and Bhojpuri

when teaching English to those students who do not already know it. From standard 3 onward, French is a required course. Students may also take classes in several Asian languages.

The government of Mauritius regards education as a sphere of utmost importance in its move toward the "second stage" of economic development, namely becoming a newly industrialized country. Therefore, at a donors' meeting in Paris in November 1991, the minister of education presented an ambitious Education Master Plan for the years 1991–2000. The plan calls for expanding education at all levels, from preprimary through university, through the establishment of new schools and the improvement of existing facilities, especially technical and vocational education; the latter is an area that to date has not provided the technical skills required by island industries. Despite the population's 95 percent literacy rate for those under thirty years of age, government officials have been concerned at the high dropout rate, especially at the secondary level. University places are also being increased to 5,000, and new courses of study are being introduced. The donor response to the plan was very favorable. The World Bank pledged US$20 million, the African Development Bank US$15 million, and other donors an additional US$14 million.

Media

The news media in Mauritius, especially the press, are lively and free. During the 1970s, the government attempted to impose some restrictions, particularly on those newspapers opposed to its policies, but fierce opposition led to the elimination of the laws.

There were five French dailies (the two principal ones being *L'Express* and *Le Mauricien*) and two small Chinese dailies with a combined circulation of more than 80,000 in 1993. Several weekly, biweekly, and monthly papers and magazines are also published, some of them in English. Most of the printed media are in the hands of political parties, religious organizations, or private firms.

The government controls the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), which regulates television and radio broadcasting. Mauritius has two television and two radio stations, which broadcast in twelve languages. About 50 percent of MBC broadcasts are in French, 25 percent in Hindi or Bhojpuri, 14 percent in English, and 11 percent in other languages. Most

Mauritians also receive French television broadcasts from Reunion.

Health and Welfare

Government-funded health services and facilities are widespread and accessible to most of the population, although facilities are concentrated in urban centers. According to data from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, between 1972 and 1987 the number of doctors per 100,000 population increased from twenty-seven to eighty. The number of hospital beds decreased from 328 to 285 per 100,000 population in the same period. In 1992 Mauritius had 3,094 hospital beds, and 1,090 physicians (including 152 specialists). Life expectancy at birth in 1994 on the island of Mauritius was 74.6 years for females and 66.6 years for males, for an overall life expectancy of 70.5 years. In 1994 infant mortality stood at 18.4 per 1,000 live births. In its 1991–92 national budget, the government allocated 7.7 percent (about US$57.9 million) to health care.

Malaria, tuberculosis, and other diseases prevalent in pre-World War II years have been brought under control by successful public health measures. The major causes of death in 1990, in descending order, were diseases of the circulatory system, diseases of the respiratory system, and cancer. With growing affluence and changes in social conditions, drug abuse has become a problem. By 1993 all the population had easy access to potable water. Nutritional standards are high; the daily per capita caloric intake in 1987 was 2,680, or 124 percent of the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization recommended requirement.

In the early 1980s, forty social welfare centers and thirty village centers provided training in nutrition and maternal and child health care, as well as recreational facilities and courses in home economics and dressmaking. The government provides services, including board and lodging, to the elderly and the infirm. Family welfare allowances are also available for the poor. The Central Housing Authority and the Mauritius Housing Corporation provide funding for low-income housing.

Role of Women

As in other industrializing countries, the role of women is changing rapidly. A major force for change has been the rapid influx of women into the many jobs created in the 1980s in the export processing zones (EPZs—see Industry and Commerce,

Opera house, Port Louis
Courtesy Mari G. Borstelmann

this ch.). Although low-paying for the most part, the jobs allow women formerly confined to the roles of mother and wife to gain a certain degree of personal and social freedom. One woman, in a 1993 *National Geographic* article, said:

> For a Mauritian woman, to work is to be free. Before, a girl could not leave home until her parents found a husband for her, and then she moved into her husband's family's home and spent the rest of her life having babies. I met my husband at work, and it was my decision to marry him. Now we live in our own house.

The government has taken measures to promote equality of the sexes by repealing discriminatory laws dealing with inheritance and emigration. In 1989 the government appointed equal opportunity officers in the principal ministries to deal with women's issues. Reports by the Ministry of Women's Rights and Family Welfare and others indicate, however, that violence

against women is prevalent. The increased employment of women has created the need for more child-care services and for more labor-saving devices in the home.

Economy

The Mauritian economy has undergone remarkable transformations since independence. From a poor country with high unemployment exporting mainly sugar and buffeted by the vagaries of world demand, Mauritius has become relatively prosperous and diverse, although not without problems.

The 1970s were marked by a strong government commitment to diversify the economy and to provide more high-paying jobs to the population. The promotion of tourism and the creation of the EPZs did much to attain these goals. Between 1971 and 1977, about 64,000 jobs were created. However, in the rush to make work, the government allowed EPZ firms to deny their workers fair wages, the right to organize and strike, and the health and social benefits afforded other Mauritian workers. The boom in the mid-1970s was also fueled by increased foreign aid and exceptional sugar crops, coupled with high world prices.

The economic situation deteriorated in the late 1970s. Petroleum prices rose, the sugar boom ended, and the balance of payments deficit steadily rose as imports outpaced exports; by 1979 the deficit amounted to a staggering US$111 million. Mauritius approached the IMF and the World Bank for assistance. In exchange for loans and credits to help pay for imports, the government agreed to institute certain measures, including cutting food subsidies, devaluing the currency, and limiting government wage increases.

By the 1980s, thanks to a widespread political consensus on broad policy measures, the economy experienced steady growth, declining inflation, high employment, and increased domestic savings. The EPZ came into its own, surpassing sugar as the principal export-earning sector and employing more workers than the sugar industry and the government combined, previously the two largest employers. In 1986 Mauritius had its first trade surplus in twelve years. Tourism also boomed, with a concomitant expansion in the number of hotel beds and air flights. An aura of optimism accompanied the country's economic success and prompted comparisons with other Asian countries that had dynamic economies, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and the Republic of Korea (South Korea).

The economy had slowed down by the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the government was optimistic that it could ensure the long-term prosperity of the country by drawing up and implementing prudent development plans. According to Larry W. Bowman, an expert on Mauritius, four development aims of the country into the 1990s will be "modernizing the sugar sector, expanding and diversifying manufacturing infrastructure, diversifying agriculture, and developing tourism." In addition, because of the threats to agriculture resulting from Europe's Common Agricultural Policy and the potential effects on textiles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Mauritius hopes to transform itself into a center for offshore banking and financial services. A stock exchange opened in Port Louis in 1989. Another sector needing attention is that of housing because increased family incomes have raised the demand for housing. Overall, Mauritius had a 1993 gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) estimated at US$8.6 billion, with a growth rate of 5.5 percent, and a 1993 inflation rate of 10.5 percent.

Agriculture and Fishing

Sugar

In 1990 the government initiated a five-year plan costing MauR7.3 billion to bolster the sugar industry. Sugarcane covers 45 percent of the total area of Mauritius and more than 90 percent of the cultivated land. Production has remained steady at between 600,000 and 700,000 tons since the mid–1960s. The exception occurs when severe cyclones or droughts cause a decline in the cane harvest.

Nineteen large estates account for about 55 percent of the 76,000 hectares planted in cane and range in size from about 730 hectares to 5,500 hectares. (Land in Mauritius is also measured in an archaic French unit, the *arpent.*) Mauritian firms own fifteen of these plantations; the British multinational Lonrho owns two and controls a Mauritian firm that owns another; and the Mauritian government owns one estate. Some 35,000 small growers (with plots ranging from less than one hectare to about 400 hectares) tend the remainder of the crop and send their harvest for processing to the large planters, each of whom owns a sugar factory.

Since 1951 the production of sugar has been encouraged by marketing arrangements with consuming countries (princi-

pally Britain), which have guaranteed prices and markets for the Mauritian crop. The government has acquired a portion of this reliable sugar income through a sugar export tax. By the mid-1980s this tax had evolved into a steeply progressive one, with producers of under 1,000 tons of cane paying no tax, producers of 1,000 to 3,000 tons paying 15.75 percent, and producers of more than 3,000 tons paying 23.625 percent. This tax provided 13 percent of the government's revenues in 1986. However, complaints mainly by the large miller/planters and severe economic pressures on the sugar industry prompted the government in 1993 to reduce the tax in each category by 9.4 percent. This move met opposition by many who claimed the large growers were being given favorable treatment.

Since 1975 Mauritius has had an export quota of about 500,000 tons per year under the Sugar Protocol of the Lomé Convention (see Glossary), the largest share of all nineteen signatories. The guaranteed price in 1991 was nearly twice the world free-market price. In 1992 the country exported 597,970 tons of sugar; of this amount, Britain received 498,919 tons.

Since 1984 the Mauritius Sugar Authority, operating under the Ministry of Agriculture, has advised the government regarding sugar policy. In addition, the authority acts as a nexus between the government and the numerous organizations involved in sugar production. These organizations include parastatal, producers', and workers' organizations, as well as extension and research bodies. The private Mauritius Sugar Syndicate, which has offices in London and Brussels, handles all aspects of domestic and foreign sugar marketing, including transportation, finance, insurance, and customs duties. The Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute (MSIRI) conducts research in such areas as plant breeding, entomology, and food-crop agronomy.

Tea

As part of its agricultural diversification efforts, the government supported the large-scale production of tea in the late 1960s. Second to sugar in exports, tea covered 2,870 hectares in 1991. The Tea Development Authority (TDA) owned and managed three-fourths of this land, which it leased to tenant growers. Although tea thrives at the island's higher elevations, production has been hindered by high costs, including labor, and fluctuations in world prices. Since 1986 the government has subsidized tea production to compensate for low prices. In

the same year, it established the Mauritius Tea Factories Company to manage four factories that had been run by the TDA.

Tea production reached 8,115 tons in 1985, its highest level, only to decline steadily to 5,918 tons in 1991. Export earnings have declined from MauR104 million in 1986 to MauR83 million in 1991. The government is considering other uses for its tea-planted land in the face of continuing economic pressures.

Other Crops

Mauritius produces enough potatoes and fresh vegetables to meet domestic demand. The government subsidizes the production of some crops. The area under cultivation for food crops was 5,494 hectares in 1991; total production was 64,090 tons. Between 1987 and 1989, food crops suffered from poor weather, including cyclones, disease, and lack of land for tenant farmers. Tobacco covered 623 hectares in 1991, and production amounted to 876 tons. British American Tobacco processed the entire crop for domestic consumption. Cut flowers have proved to be a very successful crop, beginning in the late 1980s, and efforts are also being made to produce tropical fruits for export.

Livestock

Although self-sufficient in poultry and pork, Mauritius had to import 80 percent of its dairy products and 90 percent of its beef in 1991. The following are figures for livestock production in 1991: beef, 544 tons; goat and mutton, 178 tons; pork, 906 tons; poultry, 13,250 tons; and milk, 10,800,000 liters.

Fishing

Declines in local fishing catches in the early 1980s prompted the government to institute programs aimed at ensuring self-sufficiency in fish. The programs included the construction of fishing wharves and the purchase of new vessels. In 1990 the total catch amounted to 13,985 tons, which included fish caught by foreign vessels for the tuna canning industry.

Industry and Commerce

Export Processing Zones

Industrial development in Mauritius expanded rapidly after 1971, when the government established EPZs. In return for tax

benefits, duty-free imports of raw materials and machinery, and other inducements, the owners of EPZ enterprises agree to export all their products. In the first year of operation, nine EPZ firms employing 644 persons accounted for 1 percent of export earnings. In 1992 a total of 568 EPZ enterprises employing 89,949 persons produced such items as flowers, furniture, jewelry, and leather goods. The EPZ rate of growth of employment and foreign exchange earnings slowed in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, the value of EPZ exports in 1993 set a record of MauR15.8 billion.

Textiles are the main EPZ product, accounting for 89 percent of jobs and 83 percent of exports. With regard to wearing apparel, Mauritius benefits from preferential treatment in the European Community (EC—see Glossary) under the Lomé Convention. Hong Kong, the source of 22 percent of all foreign investment, is the largest foreign investor in the textile sector. Other countries participating include France, Britain, and Germany. Two foreign firms dominate the textile industry: Socota and Woventex. In a 1991 policy paper, the government urged diversification of EPZ industries and pledged to give priority to nonclothing industries such as electronics.

Construction

The construction industry's contribution to GDP grew from 5.3 percent in 1987 to about 7.6 percent in 1992, thanks to investment in housing, roads, hotels, factories, and a new airport terminal. Average annual real growth in the construction sector between 1989 and 1992 has been around 10 percent. In 1992 an estimated 10,600 persons were employed in the industry, accounting for about 3.7 percent of total employment.

Banking

The Bank of Mauritius, established in 1966, is the country's central bank. Twelve commercial banks (eight of them foreign-owned)operate in the country; the three major ones are the State Commercial Bank, Barclays, and the Mauritius Commercial Bank. Other financial institutions include the Mauritius Housing Corporation, the State Finance Corporation, and the Development Bank of Mauritius. The national currency is the Mauritius rupee (MauR), whose March 1993 exchange rate with the United States dollar was 16.68:1.

Trade and Balance of Payments

The success of the EPZs has meant that sugar, the traditional leader in exports, has been replaced by manufactured goods. Although the level of sugar exports has remained relatively flat (rising to MauR5.3 billion in 1992 from MauR4.3 billion in 1987), EPZ exports have risen from MauR6.6 billion in 1987 to MauR13.5 billion in 1992. Most exports went to Britain (35 percent in 1991), followed by France (19 percent), the United States (11 percent), and Germany (11 percent).

Manufactured goods accounted for 34 percent of imports in 1991, followed by machinery and transportation equipment (25 percent), food (11 percent), and fuels (8 percent). In the same year, France was the main supplier of imported goods (13 percent), followed by South Africa (12 percent), Britain (7 percent), and Japan (7 percent). Other sources of imports are Germany, India, China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

The country's geographic isolation, reliance on imported fuel, food, and manufactured goods, and its limited export base have combined to create persistent visible balance of trade deficits in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Imports outpaced exports by MauR1.1 billion in 1987, and the trade deficit grew to an estimated MauR5.8 billion in 1992.

Tourism

The attractive climate and numerous beaches of Mauritius have been among the features that have attracted record numbers of tourists each year since 1984. Some 300,000 tourists visited in 1991, earning the country MauR3.9 million in foreign exchange; in 1993 the number rose to 375,000 tourists, bringing in MauR5.3 million in foreign exchange. In 1993 Mauritius had eighty-five hotels with 10,980 beds and an occupancy rate for the larger hotels of 68.5 percent; tourism employs more than 11,000 people.

The three principal sources of tourists in 1993 were Reunion (26 percent), France (21 percent), and South Africa (11 percent). Tourism increased by 10 percent in 1993 over 1992—Mauritius has concentrated on developing a quality tourist industry rather than on appealing to the mass market. Most investors in tourism are Mauritian; South Africans, French, British, and Germans also invest in tourism.

Labor

One of the government's economic successes in the late 1980s was job creation, largely through the growth of EPZ enterprises. Between 1983 and 1989, total employment rose by 55 percent. Manufacturing employment increased about 16,000 per year between 1985 and 1988, but only by 3,500 annually in the 1988 to 1992 period. Women account for about 65 percent of EPZ employees and 34 percent of total employment, representing 158,900 women. The rapid growth of manufacturing jobs has created labor shortages in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors; as a result, Chinese guest workers have been brought in by some textile factories. The total number of employed in 1992 was 282,400, and the number of unemployed was estimated at 10,300; as of 1993, unemployment was negligible (about 9,000 persons), and Mauritius could boast of full employment. Some 38 percent worked in manufacturing (27 percent in clothing firms), 20 percent in government services, and 15 percent in agriculture. As it enters the stage of becoming a newly industrialized country, Mauritius needs to use its labor force more effectively, shifting workers from less productive to more productive sectors. This transition requires the government to promote labor mobility, as well as greater technological skills and training (see Education, this ch.).

In 1991 a total of 287 registered unions and nine federations represented 107,400 workers. Unions are free to organize; however, the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) of 1973 restricts some of their activities, including the right to strike. The IRA also created the National Remuneration Board, composed of government ministers, union leaders, and employer representatives, to resolve wage disputes brought to its attention. This board, however, cannot institute hearing procedures, and most wage settlements take their lead from the annual settlement between the government and public-sector employees. Civil servants are unionized but have no right to strike. Collective bargaining is limited to the stronger labor unions, such as the dockworkers' union.

Transportation and Telecommunications

The island's network of surfaced roads covered 1,880 kilometers in 1992. In that same year, approximately 150,000 vehicles were registered. Port Louis and other urban centers have

heavy traffic congestion. Railroads have been abandoned, but an extensive bus network exists, and the government is considering the construction of a monorail network. Port Louis, the sole commercial port, is large and was recently modernized. In 1992 it handled some 3.5 million tons of cargo, about 70 percent of which was in containers. The government's Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport at Plaisance is modern, having undergone an expansion costing MauR450 million in the early 1990s. In 1992 it handled 950,000 passengers, half of whom were carried by the national carrier, Air Mauritius. In the same year, 34,000 tons of freight passed through the airport, and the average number of daily arriving and departing flights was twenty-nine. Air Mauritius plans to expand its fleet of three Boeing 727s by adding three Airbus A340-300s, expected for delivery in 1994.

Communications facilities in Mauritius are well developed, including modern postal, facsimile, and telex services. In 1992 the telephone network had a capacity of 100,000 lines. International direct dialing was instituted in 1987. Also serving the country are two radio stations, four television stations, and one International Telecommunications Satellite Organization earth station.

Water and Electricity

Imported oil is the largest source of energy for the island; consumption reached 530,000 tons in 1992. In an attempt to reduce its dependence on imported oil, the government has invested in alternative sources of energy. Most of the hydroelectric potential of the country's rivers has been exploited. (The most recent hydroelectric station, Champagne, came online in 1985.) Therefore, the prime focus has been on using a waste product of the sugar industry, bagasse, which also is less damaging to the environment, in generating electricity. Two bagasse-fired plants were proposed, and studies for them were funded by the World Bank in 1992. In 1991 electric power production amounted to 737.2 million kilowatt-hours.

Budget and Public Finance

Whereas successive governments have differed on questions such as social welfare spending, labor policy, and privatization, they have maintained remarkable unanimity in passing budgets and promulgating policies aimed at strengthening the national economy. Faced with growing budget deficits in the late 1970s,

for example, Mauritius implemented a Structural Adjustment Program in 1979–80 drawn up principally by the IMF and the World Bank. The program has been relatively successful; budget deficits fell from 12.6 percent of GDP in 1981–82 to below 2 percent of GDP in the early 1990s. (Deficits during fiscal years (FY—see Glossary) 1988–89 and 1989–90 rose above 30 percent of GDP, however, in large part because of increases in government salaries.) In May 1991, Mauritius paid all its debt to the IMF ahead of schedule, a rare accomplishment for a developing country.

Revenues during FY 1991–92 amounted to MauR10.9 billion; government estimates showed 90 percent coming from tax revenues and 10 percent from non-tax revenues and grants. Expenditures for the year amounted to MauR11.8 billion, of which MauR2.6 billion went to public debt service; MauR1 billion to social security; MauR1.5 billion to education, arts, and culture; and MauR778 million to health. In 1993 the government was set to reform the tax system in order to widen the tax base and reduce evasion.

The budget for the FY 1994–95 came to MauR17.8 billion, of which MauR1.3 billion was designated for foreign and domestic debt repayment. Revenue was estimated at MauR15 billion, of which MauR2.7 billion came from direct taxes, MauR9.6 billion from indirect taxes, MauR1.5 billion or 2.2 percent of gross national product (GNP—see Glossary) from a budget deficit, and the remainder from foreign support and miscellaneous sources. The budget contained some new provisions to encourage investment and savings; it abolished foreign currency controls and eliminated the tax on sugar products. Budgetary appropriations in 1994–95 included MauR2.4 billion for education (almost double the 1991–92 amount), MauR208 million to train middle management (compared with MauR90 million the previous year), MauR138 million for industry, and MauR327 million to build 2,000 houses for low-income families. The FY 1993–94 budget had stressed health, allocating MauR1.2 billion to this area and MauR552 million for road construction, as well as appropriations for lengthening by 780 meters the runway at Sir Seewoosagur Rangoolam International Airport and providing 75,000 new telephone lines.

These budgetary appropriations fell within the broader framework of the 1992–94 development plan, released in April 1993. The plan emphasized the role of the private sector and of

the free market as opposed to public-sector bodies and state controls. The plan aimed at an overall annual growth rate of 6 percent: 4.9 percent in agriculture, 10.5 percent in construction, 7.7 percent in the EPZ, 6.5 percent in financial and business services, 9 percent in tourism, and 9.5 percent in utilities (electricity, gas, and water). Specific plan allocations were the following: agriculture MauR1.85 billion, airport MauR1.28 billion, education MauR1.02 billion, environment MauR1.89 billion, health MauR602 million, housing MauR7.86 billion, industry MauR219 million, roads MauR1.39 billion, Rodrigues and other islands MauR658 million, social services MauR124 million, telecommunications MauR866 million, tourism MauR257 million, water MauR951 million, and youth and sports MauR152 million.

Government and Politics

Structure of Government

The 1968 constitution proclaims that Mauritius is a "democratic state" and that the constitution is the supreme law of the land. It guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people, including the right to hold private property and to be free from racial or other discrimination. Fundamental rights can only be suspended during wars or states of emergency, which must be duly declared by the parliament and reviewed every six months.

The political structure is patterned to a large extent on the British system. As in Britain, the political party that can gain support from a majority in parliament chooses the prime minister, who, along with the cabinet, wields political power.

The National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale or parliament), the country's prime law-making body, consists of representatives elected from twenty three-member constituencies and one two-member district on Rodrigues. In addition, unlike the British system, eight assembly seats are apportioned to the "best losers" among the nonelected candidates, according to their ethno-religious affiliation—two each for Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, and the general population. An attempt must be made to distribute these seats proportionally to the major political parties, which are expressly referred to in the constitution. The sixty seats from the constituencies, together with the eight best-loser seats and the two seats representing Rodrigues, constitute the seventy-member parliament or National Assembly.

Parliament may remain in office for a maximum of five years, unless it is dissolved by a vote of no-confidence or an act of the prime minister. A constitutional amendment, however, provided that the first assembly reckon its term from 1971, a de facto term of eight years. The assembly is responsible for all legislation and appropriations and may amend the constitution by either a two-thirds or three-quarters majority, depending on the part of the constitution in question. A largely titular governor general presided over parliament in the name of the British monarch from independence in 1968 until March 12, 1992, when Mauritius declared itself a republic. Since then a president, appointed by the prime minister and ratified by the parliament, has assumed the role of the governor general.

The constitution also provides for three important commissions—the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, the Public Services Commission, and the Police Service Commission—as well as an ombudsman. The commissions oversee the appointment of government officials; the ombudsman investigates official misconduct.

The country's legal system is based on the Napoleonic Code and English common law. The Supreme Court heads the judicial system and has the power to interpret the constitution and to judge the constitutionality of legislation brought to its attention. Appointed by the prime minister and president, the chief justice helps select five other judges on the court. The Supreme Court also serves as the Court of Criminal Appeal and the Court of Civil Appeal. Mauritius continues to refer legal and constitutional matters of undeterminable jurisdiction to Britain's Privy Council. Lower courts having original jurisdiction over various kinds of cases include the Intermediate Court, the Industrial Court, and ten district courts.

The constitution does not specify the form of local government. Port Louis has a city council, whereas the four townships—Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, Curepipe, Quatre Bornes, and Vacoas-Phoenix—each have a municipal council. There are district councils for Pamplemousses-Rivière du Rempart, Moka-Flacq, and Grand Port-Savanne; 124 village councils; and five parish councils on Rodrigues. All councils are elected bodies, but the cabinet occasionally—over much opposition—has suspended municipal elections because of political unrest. In the August 30, 1992, village elections, villages each elected twelve village councillors, who then were grouped into four district councils. In seven of the 124 villages, the candidates were

unopposed. In the remaining villages, 3,577 persons ran for 1,404 seats. The election turnout represented 68 percent of eligible voters. Local governments depend on the central government for more than 70 percent of their revenues, and only the municipal councils have the power to levy their own taxes.

Politics of the Republic of Mauritius

Mauritius became the twenty-ninth republic under the British Commonwealth on March 12, 1992. Even during the transition period, the varied and lively social and political forces of the country manifested themselves. The former governor general, Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo, a Hindu, was appointed first president for three months to appease Hindu voters. On July 1, in accordance with an electoral pact between the ruling parties, the MSM and the MMM, the MMM obtained the post of president for Cassam Uteem, a Muslim and former deputy leader of the party. His appointment aroused widespread opposition from MSM politicians and from the island's Hindu majority, the source of much MSM support. Critics feared that Uteem, formerly minister of industry and industrial technology, would unduly politicize his office and promote a strongly pro-Muslim agenda. Upon taking office, Uteem tried to assuage these misgivings by stating that he would look after the interests of all Mauritians, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or politics. He also said that he would play an active (not merely ceremonial), impartial role in the political life of the country.

Although the MLP and PMSD suffered heavy electoral losses in the September 1991 general election and were faced with internal weakness, they attempted to act as an assertive and contentious opposition. The PMSD lost its veteran leader Sir Gaetan Duval at the end of 1991 after his retirement. The MLP's leader, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, has been attacked by his own political allies for his inexperience in high office and frequent overseas travels. The opposition was quick to criticize the prime minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, for issuing a new MR20 bank note with the image of the prime minister's wife in mid–1992. In addition, the opposition and the ruling coalition have taken each other to court over charges of fraud in the 1991 election.

A particularly acrimonious row developed over Ramgoolam's absence from parliament beginning in July 1992 in order to pursue a law degree in London. The speaker of the National Assembly claimed that the MLP leader violated rules

relating to absences by members of parliament. The case was referred to the Supreme Court. The Ramgoolam affair not only has prompted grumbling within the MLP but also has highlighted the tension within the ruling coalition, namely, the continuing friction between Paul Bérenger, external affairs minister and secretary general of the MMM, and Prime Minister Jugnauth. Bérenger criticized Jugnauth for calling the National Assembly out of recess while Ramgoolam was out of the country, claiming that the prime minister was merely creating another pretext for stripping the MLP leader of his seat.

Matters came to a head in August 1993 when the prime minister dismissed Bérenger because of his continuing criticism of government policy. The ouster led to a split in the MMM between members of the party who remained allied with the government of MSM Prime Minister Jugnauth, led by Deputy Prime Minister Prem Nababsing, and those MMM parliamentary members who supported Bérenger and went into opposition. Bérenger declined to become opposition leader, although his group was the largest single opposition element; he allowed the leader of the Labor Party, Navin Ramgoolam, to continue as opposition leader. In April 1994, Bérenger and Navin Ramgoolam reached an electoral agreement according to which the two groups were to cooperate.

Foreign Relations

The orientation of Mauritius toward other countries is influenced by its location, resources, colonial past, domestic politics, and economic imperatives. Mauritius has particularly strong relations with Britain, France, India, and since 1990 with South Africa. A member of the Commonwealth, Mauritius recognized Queen Elizabeth II as head of state until it became a republic in 1992. Mauritius enjoys warm political relations and important economic ties with Britain, and receives significant development and technical assistance.

France, another former colonial power, provides Mauritius with its largest source of financial aid, and also promotes the use of the French language in Mauritius. In addition to trade, in which France has traditionally been Mauritius's largest supplier as well as its largest or second largest customer, particularly of textiles, France provides Mauritius with numerous kinds of assistance. For example, France has helped computerize the island's government ministries, has performed road feasibility studies and highway maintenance, has undertaken

livestock services and the construction of a cannery, and has loaned Mauritius US$60 million to construct a large diesel-electric power station in western Mauritius, completed in 1992. Other French-sponsored infrastructure projects have included the French firm Alcatel's supply and installation of 30,000 additional telephone lines, a contract awarded in December 1988, and a five-year project scheduled to begin construction in January 1995 by SCAC Delmas Vieljeux (SCV) to create a ninety-hectare free-port area and attendant facilities at Port Louis. The intent is that the free port should serve as a means for attracting African trade under the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa.

An area of tension between France and Mauritius relates to the latter's claim to Tromelin Island, some 550 kilometers northwest of Mauritius, which France retained when Mauritius received its independence. Tromelin had been governed by France from Mauritius during the colonial period, and Mauritius for a number of years has raised the question of the return of the one-square-kilometer island where France has a meteorological observation station. When French president François Mitterrand visited Mauritius (along with Madagascar, Comoros, and Seychelles) in 1990, Mauritius raised its claim; despite several subsequent discussions, the matter has not been resolved.

Mauritius acknowledges the legitimacy of France's military interests even though it supported the UN Indian Ocean Zone of Peace (IOZP) Resolution (adopted in 1971) calling for the demilitarization of the region. French military interests include the neighboring island of Reunion, a French *département* and headquarters for a military detachment. France has also provided the Special Mobile Force of Mauritius with MauR2.8 million worth of military equipment and training.

India, which has deep social and historical links with a large portion of the population of Mauritius, is the country's second largest source of foreign assistance. India has devoted a large share of aid to cultural ventures, such as the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, a library and language school opened in 1976.

Apart from traditional cultural and trade relations of Mauritius with India, the two countries have exchanged visits by their leading officials in recent years; have engaged in numerous joint ventures, particularly in the textiles area; and have signed cooperation agreements in various spheres. For example, in 1990 cooperation agreements were concluded in the fields of agriculture; oceanography; maritime resources, including the

exploitation of Mauritius's EEZ; science and technology; drug trafficking; and sports and youth affairs. India has provided Mauritius with technical expertise, such as computer and high sensing technology, radio and telecommunications, further expansion of Mauritius's telephone lines from 60,000 to 100,000 lines over a three-year period beginning in 1991, and the creation of a science center and planetarium.

In the early 1990s, Mauritius saw the new South Africa as a partner, particularly in an economic sense, and was willing to forget charges that in 1989 South Africans had engaged in drug trafficking to Mauritius and had sought to assassinate Prime Minister Jugnauth. A South African trade bureau was approved in 1990; a health cooperation agreement was concluded in 1991 whereby Mauritians requiring complex medical procedures could obtain them in South African hospitals; and President Frederik Willem de Klerk visited Mauritius in November 1991. The two countries initiated diplomatic relations at the consular level in March 1992, and a South African resort chain began activities in Mauritius in late 1992.

Mauritius has sought to increase cooperation among its fellow island entities. In 1982 the country forged an agreement that created the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), whose members include Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros, and Reunion (represented by France). IOC members have met regularly to discuss social and economic relations, and in 1989 the IOC established its secretariat in Mauritius. Mauritius has particularly close cooperation with Seychelles in the fields of agriculture, education, energy, fishing, and transportation.

Relations between the United States and Mauritius have been dominated by questions of trade and sovereignty over Diego Garcia Island, a British possession that is the site of a United States military base. Exports from Mauritius, mostly textiles, have grown from US$28 million in 1982 to US$120 million in 1987. United States import quotas have restricted the level of Mauritian exports to the United States, however. Mauritian imports from the United States have increased from US$11 million in 1986 to US$48 million in 1991.

The question of Diego Garcia is a complex one. Mauritius ceded control over the Chagos Archipelago (including Diego Garcia) to Britain in exchange for 3 million pounds sterling in 1965 as one tacit precondition for independence. Despite UN objections to British control of the islands, Britain leased Diego Garcia to the United States in 1966 for fifty years. The United

States established a major military base on the island, including anchorage facilities for large numbers of ships, an airfield capable of handling B–52s, and a satellite communications facility. After a period of relative indifference to the fate of the Chagos Archipelago following its cession, Mauritian governments since the late 1980s have called for its return to Mauritian sovereignty. There was no indication in 1994 that Britain or the United States was willing to acquiesce. Differences of opinion notwithstanding, between 1982 and 1987 the United States provided Mauritius with US$56.2 million in aid, mainly for development.

Mauritius has limited but growing trade relations with the industrializing countries of Asia, particularly Hong Kong and Japan. It also has close relations with China. Although it belongs to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and has been an opponent of apartheid, Mauritius has closer links to South Africa than to any other country on the continent. These relations are based in large part on the economic exigency of obtaining mainly manufactured goods more cheaply from the closest developed country.

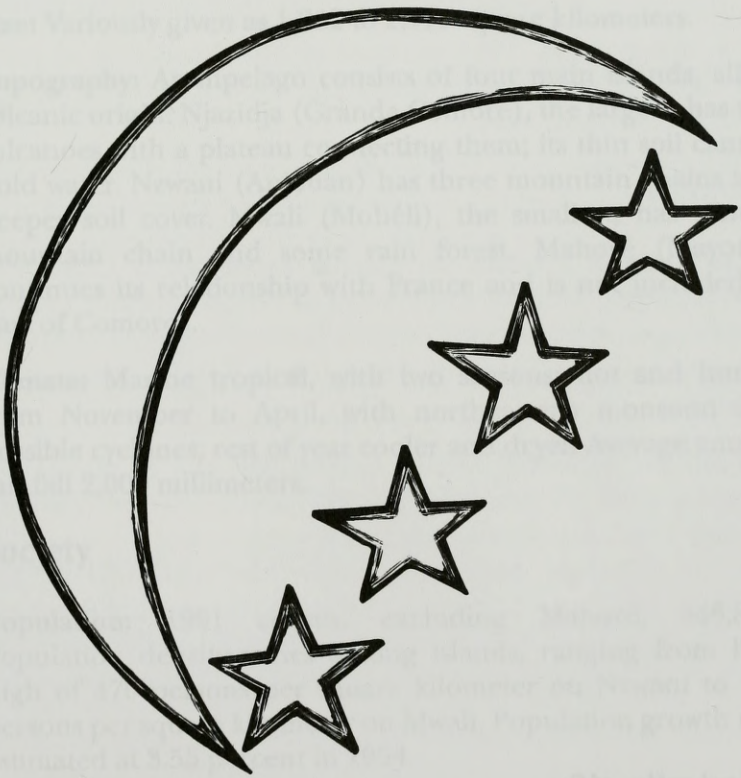
In addition to membership in the OAU, UN, and Commonwealth, Mauritius belongs to the Nonaligned Movement. It has received assistance from the World Bank, the IMF, and the European Development Bank.

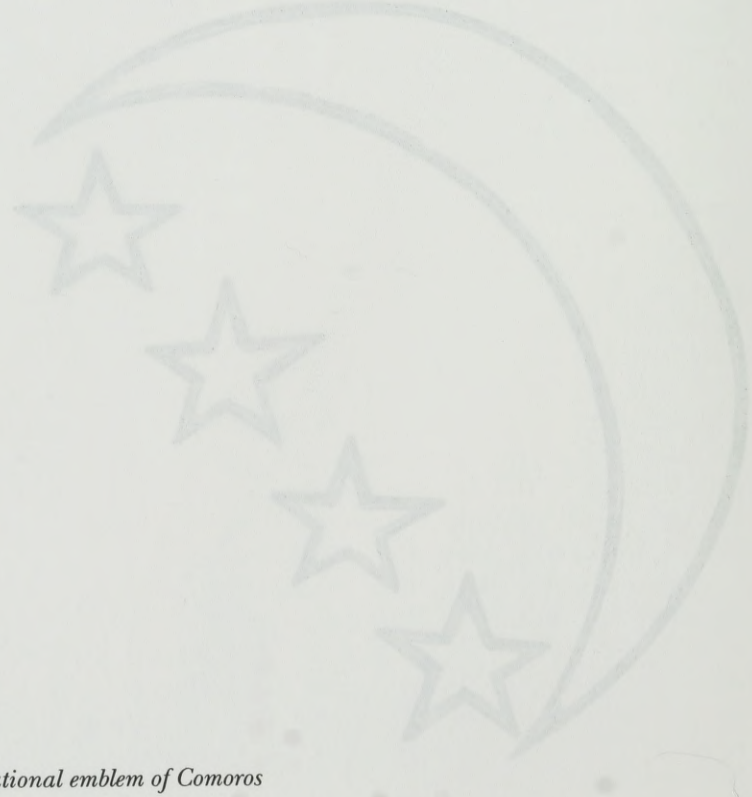
* * *

For an excellent overview of the history, society, economy and foreign relations of Mauritius, see Larry W. Bowman's *Mauritius: Democracy and Development in the Indian Ocean.* The best in-depth account of the country's pre-independence history, with special attention to the twentieth century, is *Modern Mauritius* by Adele Smith Simmons. Particularly useful for detailed and current economic and political information are publications of the Economist Intelligence Unit: the annual *Country Profile: Mauritius, Seychelles* and the quarterly *Country Report: Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros.*

Other useful works include *Mauritius: Development of a Plural Society* by A.R. Mannick; *The Economic and Social Structure of Mauritius* by J.E. Meade, et al.; and the World Bank publication, *Mauritius: Managing Success.* Updates of mainly economic news appear in *Africa Economic Digest* and *Marchés tropicaux et méditerranéens.* (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 3. Comoros





National emblem of Comoros

Country Profile

Country

Formal Name: Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros.

Short Name: Comoros.

Term for Citizens: Comorans (or Comorians).

Capital: Moroni.

Date of Independence: July 6, 1975 (from France).

Geography

Size: Variously given as 1,862 to 2,170 square kilometers.

Topography: Archipelago consists of four main islands, all of volcanic origin. Njazidja (Grande Comore), the largest, has two volcanoes with a plateau connecting them; its thin soil cannot hold water. Nzwani (Anjouan) has three mountain chains and deeper soil cover. Mwali (Mohéli), the smallest, has central mountain chain and some rain forest. Mahoré (Mayotte) continues its relationship with France and is not included as part of Comoros.

Climate: Marine tropical, with two seasons: hot and humid from November to April, with northeastern monsoon and possible cyclones; rest of year cooler and dryer. Average annual rainfall 2,000 millimeters.

Society

Population: 1991 census, excluding Mahoré, 446,817. Population density varies among islands, ranging from 1991 high of 470 persons per square kilometer on Nzwani to 120 persons per square kilometer on Mwali. Population growth rate estimated at 3.55 percent in 1994.

Ethnic Groups: Arabs, descendants of Shirazi settlers; African

groups: Cafres and Makoa; Malayo-Indonesian peoples: Oimatsaha, Antalotes, and Sakalava; and Creoles, descendants of French settlers.

Languages: Arabic (official), French (official), and Comoran dialect related to Swahili.

Religion: Sunni Muslim, 86 percent; Roman Catholic, 14 percent.

Education and Literacy: Education compulsory for ages seven through fifteen; about 75 percent of primary-school-age children enrolled in 1993 in schools following French educational system. No university but postsecondary education available. Adult literacy in 1993 only 50 percent.

Health: Health care and most health facilities in poor condition. Malaria endemic; 80 to 90 percent of population affected. Scarcity of safe drinking water and child malnutrition are problem areas. 1994 estimate of life expectancy at birth fifty-eight years. Infant mortality rate estimated at eighty per 1,000 live births in 1994.

Economy

Gross National Product per Capita: Estimated at US$400 in 1994 following January devaluation of Comoran franc. One of world's poorest countries, Comoros became eligible in 1991 for International Development Association's Special Program of Assistance.

Agriculture: Including fishing, provided about 40 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1994 and involved 80 percent of labor force. Almost all meat and vegetables and much of rice must be imported. Main cash crops ylang-ylang essence for perfume, vanilla, and cloves, all subject to fluctuating demand. Various agricultural development projects underway with foreign aid. Livestock raising limited; fishing being expanded.

Industry: Provided 5 percent of GDP in 1994. Most industries entailed processing cash crops or handicrafts. Efforts underway to develop tourism, which, with other services, provided 25

percent of GDP in 1994.

Exports: Ylang-ylang (world's largest producer), vanilla (world's second largest producer), cloves. Exports estimated at US$21 million in 1992; major markets United States and France.

Imports: Basic foodstuffs, petroleum, construction materials. Imports estimated at US$60 million in 1992; major sources: France and Belgium-Luxembourg.

Currency and Exchange Rate: One Comoran franc (CF) = 100 centimes. In June 1995, US$1.00 = CF363.98.

Inflation: Estimated at 15 percent in 1994.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Roads: 750 kilometers of roads along coasts, of which 210 kilometers paved.

Airports: Daily flights to islands carried most passenger traffic; four airports with permanent-surface runways; airstrips on all islands. Air Comores is national carrier.

Ports: Mutsamudu on Nzwani and Moroni on Njazidja have artificial harbors. Almost all freight carried by sea.

Telecommunications: Moroni has international telecommunications; estimated 3,000 telephones in few existing towns in 1987. Two radio broadcast stations, one amplitude modulation (AM), one frequency modulation (FM).

Government and Politics

Government: Constitution approved in referendum on June 7, 1992. Islam is state religion. President elected by universal suffrage for five-year term; president nominates ministers to form twelve-member Council of Government; prime minister belongs to majority party in legislature. Bicameral legislature: Federal Assembly elected for four-year terms; Senate appointed

by Electoral College. Supreme Court and judiciary independent branch.

Politics: More than twenty political parties active in 1994. Most recent election in December 1993, with voting irregularities. Incumbent ruling coalition declared selves winners with twenty-two of forty-two seats. Opposition parties refused to participate in legislature.

Foreign Relations: Close relationships traditionally with France and recently with conservative Persian Gulf states and to lesser extent with South Africa. Good regional relations with Madagascar, Mauritius, and Seychelles in Indian Ocean Commission. Also developing relations with China and Japan.

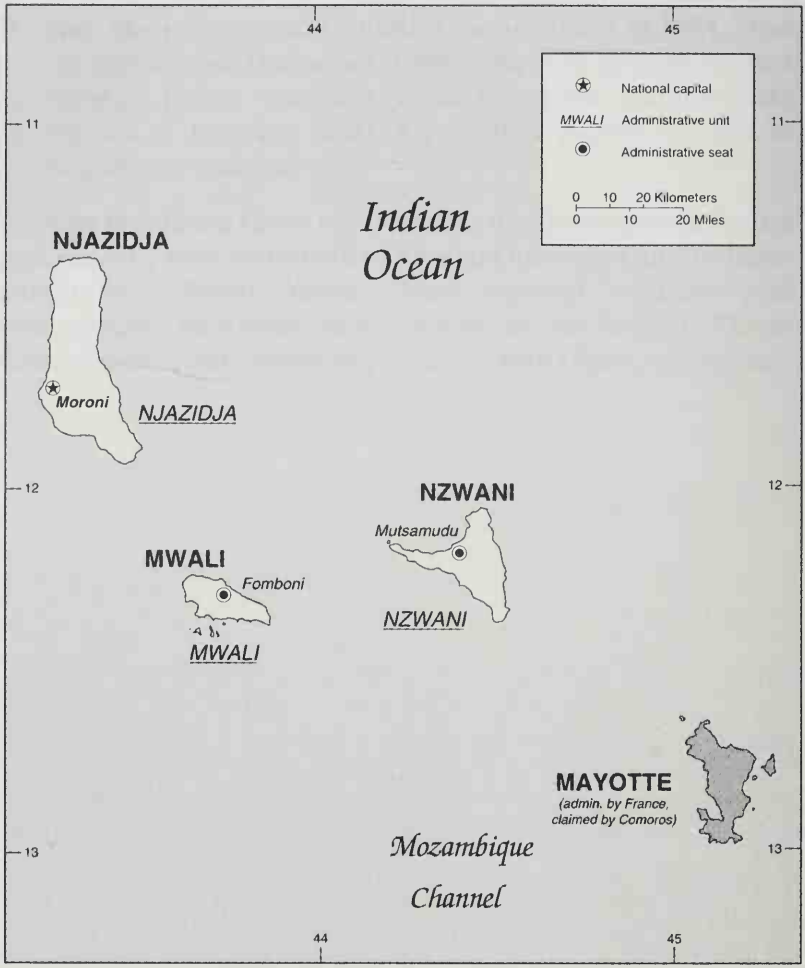


Figure 6. Comoros: Administrative Divisions, 1994

THE FEDERAL ISLAMIC REPUBLIC of the Comoros is an archipelago situated in the western Indian Ocean, about midway between the island of Madagascar and the coast of East Africa at the northern end of the Mozambique Channel. The archipelago has served in past centuries as a stepping stone between the African continent and Madagascar, as a southern outpost for Arab traders operating along the East African coast, and as a center of Islamic culture. The name "Comoros" is derived from the Arabic *kamar* or *kumr*, meaning "moon," although this name was first applied by Arab geographers to Madagascar. In the nineteenth century, Comoros was absorbed into the French overseas empire, but it unilaterally proclaimed independence from France on July 6, 1975.

Comoros has had a troubled and uncertain course as an independent state. Mahoré, or Mayotte, the easternmost of the archipelago's four main islands, including Njazidja (formerly Grande Comore), Mwali (formerly Mohéli), and Nzwani (formerly Anjouan), remains under French administration, a majority of its voters having chosen to remain tied to France in referendums held in 1974 and 1976 (see Physical Environment, this ch.). By the mid-1990s, the integration of Mahoré into Comoros remained an official objective of the Comoran government, but it had taken a back seat to more pressing concerns, such as developing a viable national economy. Meanwhile, the Mahorais were making the most of their close relationship with France. They accepted large amounts of developmental aid and took an intense interest in French political events. Although South Africa played a major role in the Comoran economy in the 1980s, by the early 1990s France was the island republic's foremost patron, providing economic aid, political guidance, and national security.

Comoros is densely populated and dedicates only limited amounts of land to food production. Thus, it depends heavily on imports of rice, vegetables, and meat. Its economy is based on the production of cash crops, principally ylang-ylang (perfume essence), vanilla, and cloves, all of which have experienced wild price swings in recent years, thus complicating economic planning and contributing to a burgeoning trade deficit. A growing dependence on foreign aid, often provided to meet day-to-day needs for food, funds, and government

operations, further clouds economic prospects. Comoros suffers the ills of a developing nation in particularly severe form: food shortages and inadequate diets, poor health standards, a high rate of population growth, widespread illiteracy, and international indebtedness.

The country has endured political and natural catastrophes. Less than a month after independence, the government of the first Comoran president, Ahmed Abdallah, was overthrown; in 1978 foreign mercenaries carried out a second coup, overthrowing the radical regime of Ali Soilih and returning Abdallah to power. Indigenous riots in Madagascar in 1976 led to the repatriation of an estimated 17,000 Comorans. The eruption of the volcano, Kartala, on Njazidja in 1977 displaced some 2,000 people and possibly hastened the downfall of the Soilih regime. Cyclones in the 1980s, along with a violent coup that included the assassination of President Abdallah in 1989 and two weeks of rule by European mercenaries, rounded out the first fifteen years of Comoran independence.

In the early 1990s, the omnipresent mercenaries of the late 1970s and 1980s were gone, and the winding down of civil conflict in southern Africa, in combination with the end of the Cold War, had reduced the republic's value as a strategic chess piece. However, as in the 1970s and 1980s, the challenge to Comorans was to find a way off the treadmills of economic dependency and domestic political dysfunction.

Historical Setting

Early Visitors and Settlers

Little is known of the first inhabitants of the archipelago, although a sixth-century settlement has been uncovered on Nzwani by archaeologists. Historians speculated that Indonesian immigrants used the islands as stepping stones on the way to Madagascar prior to A.D. 1000. Because Comoros lay at the juncture of African, Malayo-Indonesian, and Arab spheres of influence, the present population reflects a blend of these elements in its physical characteristics, language, culture, social structure, and religion. Local legend cites the first settlement of the archipelago by two families from Arabia after the death of Solomon. Legend also tells of a Persian king, Husain ibn Ali, who established a settlement on Comoros around the beginning of the eleventh century. Bantu peoples apparently moved to Comoros before the fourteenth century, principally from

the coast of what is now southern Mozambique; on the island of Nzwani they apparently encountered an earlier group of inhabitants, a Malayo-Indonesian people. A number of chieftains bearing African titles established settlements on Njazidja and Nzwani, and by the fifteenth century they probably had contact with Arab merchants and traders who brought the Islamic faith to the islands.

A watershed in the history of the islands was the arrival of the Shirazi Arabs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Shirazi, who originated from the city of Shiraz in what is now Iran, were Sunni (see Glossary) Muslims adhering to the legal school of Muhammad ibn Idris ash Shafii, an eighth-century Meccan scholar who followed a middle path in combining tradition and independent judgment in legal matters. The Shirazi Arabs traveled and traded up and down the East African coast and as far east as India and Maldives. A legend is recounted on Comoros and on the East African coast of seven Shirazi brothers who set sail in seven ships, landed on the coast of northwest Madagascar and on Njazidja and Nzwani, and established colonies in the fifteenth century. The Shirazi, who divided Njazidja into eleven sultanates and Nzwani into two, extended their rule to Mahoré and Mwali, although the latter in the nineteenth century came under the control of Malagasy rulers. The Shirazi built mosques and established Islam as the religion of the islands. They also introduced stone architecture, carpentry, cotton weaving, the cultivation of a number of fruits, and the Persian solar calendar. By the sixteenth century, the Comoros had become a center of regional trade, exporting rice, ambergris, spices, and slaves to ports in East Africa and the Middle East in exchange for opium, cotton cloth, and other items.

The first Europeans to visit the islands were the Portuguese, who landed on Njazidja around 1505. The islands first appear on a European map in 1527, that of Portuguese cartographer Diogo Roberos. Dutch sixteenth-century accounts describe the Comoros' sultanates as prosperous trade centers with the African coast and Madagascar. Intense competition for this trade, and, increasingly, for European commerce, resulted in constant warfare among the sultanates, a situation that persisted until the French occupation. The sultans of Njazidja only occasionally recognized the supremacy of one of their number as *tibe*, or supreme ruler.

By the early seventeenth century, slaves had become Comoros' most important export commodity, although the market

for the islands' other products also continued to expand, mainly in response to the growing European presence in the region. To meet this increased demand, the sultans began using slave labor themselves, following common practice along the East African coast.

Beginning in 1785, the Sakalava of the west coast of Madagascar began slaving raids on Comoros. They captured thousands of inhabitants and carried them off in outrigger canoes to be sold in French-occupied Madagascar, Mauritius, or Reunion to work on the sugar plantations, many of which French investors owned. The island of Mahoré, closest of the group to Madagascar, was virtually depopulated. Comoran pleas for aid from the French and the other European powers went unanswered, and the raids ceased only after the Sakalava kingdoms were conquered by the Merina of Madagascar's central highlands. After the Merina conquest, groups of Sakalava and Betsimisaraka peoples left Madagascar and settled on Mahoré and Mwali.

Prosperity was restored as Comoran traders again became involved in transporting slaves from the East African coast to Reunion and Madagascar. Dhows carrying slaves brought in huge profits for their investors. On Comoros, it was estimated in 1865 that as much as 40 percent of the population consisted of slaves. For the elite, owning a large number of slaves to perform fieldwork and household service was a mark of status. On the eve of the French occupation, Comoran society consisted of three classes: the elite of the Shirazi sultans and their families, a middle class of free persons or commoners, and a slave class consisting of those who had been brought from the African coast or their descendants.

French Colonization

France's presence in the western Indian Ocean dates to the early seventeenth century. The French established a settlement in southern Madagascar in 1634 and occupied the islands of Reunion and Rodrigues; in 1715 France claimed Mauritius (Île de France), and in 1756 Seychelles. When France ceded Mauritius, Rodrigues, and Seychelles to Britain in 1814, it lost its Indian Ocean ports; Reunion, which remained French, did not offer a suitable natural harbor. In 1840 France acquired the island of Nosy-Be off the northwestern coast of Madagascar, but its potential as a port was limited. In 1841 the governor of Reunion, Admiral de Hell, negotiated with Andrian Souli, the

Malagasy ruler of Mayotte, to cede Mayotte to France. Mahoré offered a suitable site for port facilities, and its acquisition was justified by de Hell on the grounds that if France did not act, Britain would occupy the island.

Although France had established a foothold in Comoros, the acquisition of the other islands proceeded fitfully. At times the French were spurred on by the threat of British intervention, especially on Nzwani, and at other times, by the constant anarchy resulting from the sultans' wars upon each other. In the 1880s, Germany's growing influence on the East African coast added to the concerns of the French. Not until 1908, however, did the four Comoro Islands become part of France's colony of Madagascar and not until 1912 did the last sultan abdicate. Then, a colonial administration took over the islands and established a capital at Dzaoudzi on Mahoré. Treaties of protectorate status marked a transition point between independence and annexation; such treaties were signed with the rulers of Njazidja, Nzwani, and Mwali in 1886.

The effects of French colonialism were mixed, at best. Colonial rule brought an end to the institution of slavery, but economic and social differences between former slaves and free persons and their descendants persisted. Health standards improved with the introduction of modern medicine, and the population increased about 50 percent between 1900 and 1960. France continued to dominate the economy. Food crop cultivation was neglected as French *sociétés* (companies) established cash crop plantations in the coastal regions. The result was an economy dependent on the exporting of vanilla, ylang-ylang, cloves, cocoa, copra, and other tropical crops. Most profits obtained from exports were diverted to France rather than invested in the infrastructure of the islands. Development was further limited by the colonial government's practice of concentrating public services on Madagascar. One consequence of this policy was the migration of large numbers of Comorans to Madagascar, where their presence would be a long-term source of tension between Comoros and its giant island neighbor. The Shirazi elite continued to play a prominent role as large landowners and civil servants. On the eve of independence, Comoros remained poor and undeveloped, having only one secondary school and practically nothing in the way of national media. Isolated from important trade routes by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, having few

natural resources, and largely neglected by France, the islands were poorly equipped for independence.

In 1946 the Comoro Islands became an overseas department of France with representation in the French National Assembly. The following year, the islands' administrative ties to Madagascar were severed; Comoros established its own customs regime in 1952. A Governing Council was elected in August 1957 on the four islands in conformity with the *loi-cadre* (enabling law) of June 23, 1956. A constitution providing for internal self-government was promulgated in 1961, following a 1958 referendum in which Comorans voted overwhelmingly to remain a part of France. This government consisted of a territorial assembly having, in 1975, thirty-nine members, and a Governing Council of six to nine ministers responsible to it.

The Break with France

Politics in the 1960s were dominated by a social and economic elite—largely descendants of the precolonial sultanate ruling families—which was conservative and pro-French. During Comoros' period of self-government as an overseas department, there were two main conservative political groupings: the Parti Vert (Green Party), which later became known as the Comoros Democratic Union (Union Démocratique des Comores—UDC), and the Parti Blanc (White Party), later reconstituted as the Democratic Assembly of the Comoran People (Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Comorien—RDPC). Dr. Said Mohamed Cheikh, president of the Parti Vert and of the Governing Council, was, until his death in 1970, the most important political leader in the islands. The Parti Blanc, under Prince Said Ibrahim, provided the opposition, endorsing a progressive program that included land reform and a loosening of the monopoly on Comoran cash crops enjoyed by the foreign-owned plantation *sociétés*. The second most powerful member of the Parti Vert, Ahmed Abdallah, a wealthy plantation owner and representative to the French National Assembly, succeeded Cheikh as president of the Governing Council soon after Cheikh died.

Well into the 1960s, the two established parties were concerned primarily with maintaining a harmonious relationship with France while obtaining assistance in economic planning and infrastructure development. Given this consensus, politically active Comorans often based their allegiance on personal feelings toward the doctor and the prince who led the two

main parties and on whatever patronage either party could provide.

The independence movement started not in the Comoro Islands but among Comoran expatriates in Tanzania, who founded the National Liberation Movement of Comoros (Mouvement de la Libération Nationale des Comores—Molinaco) in 1962. Molinaco actively promoted the cause of Comoran independence abroad, particularly in the forum of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but not until 1967 did it begin to extend its influence to the islands themselves, engaging in largely clandestine activities. The Socialist Party of Comoros (Parti Socialiste des Comores—Pasoco), established in 1968, was largely supported by students and other young people.

A growing number of politically conscious Comorans, resenting what they perceived as French neglect of the Comoro Islands, supported independence. Independence-minded Comorans, especially younger ones, were energized by dramatic events across the Mozambique Channel on the African mainland. Tanganyika had gained its independence from Britain in 1961 and soon adopted a government based on "African socialism." Zanzibar, another long-time British colony, became independent in 1963 and overthrew the ruling Arab elite in a violent revolution the following year; the island state then merged with Tanganyika to form the new nation of Tanzania. Meanwhile, nationalists were beginning uprisings in the Portuguese colony of Mozambique.

Abdallah, although a conservative politician, saw independence as a "regrettable necessity," given the unsatisfactory level of French support and the growing alienation of an increasingly radicalized younger generation. The violent suppression of a student demonstration in 1968 and the death of Said Mohammed Cheikh in 1970 provided further evidence of the erosion of the existing order. In 1972 leaders of the Parti Vert (now the UDC) and the Parti Blanc (now the RDPC) agreed to press for independence, hoping at the same time to maintain cordial relations with France. A coalition of conservative and moderate parties, the Party for the Evolution of Comoros (Parti pour l'Évolution des Comores), was in the forefront of the independence effort. The coalition excluded Pasoco, which it perceived as violently revolutionary, but it cooperated for a time with Molinaco. During 1973 and 1974, the local government negotiated with France, and issued a "Common Declaration" on June 15, 1973, defining the means by which the

islands would gain independence. Part of the backdrop of the negotiations was a pro-independence riot in November 1973 in Moroni in which the buildings of the Chamber of Deputies were burned. A referendum was held on December 22, 1974. Voters supported independence by a 95 percent majority, but 65 percent of those casting ballots on Mahoré chose to remain as a French department (see The Issue of Mahoré, this ch.).

Twenty-eight days after the declaration of independence, on August 3, 1975, a coalition of six political parties known as the United National Front overthrew the Abdallah government, with the aid of foreign mercenaries. Some observers claimed that French commercial interests, and possibly even the French government, had helped provide the funds and the matériel to bring off the coup. The reasons for the coup remain obscure, although the belief that France might return Mahoré to Comoros if Abdallah were out of power appears to have been a contributing factor. Abdallah fled to Nzwani, his political power base, where he remained in control with an armed contingent of forty-five men until forces from Moroni recaptured the island and arrested him in late September 1975. After the coup, a three-man directorate took control. One of the three, Ali Soilih, was appointed minister of defense and justice and subsequently was made head of state by the Chamber of Deputies on January 3, 1976. Four days earlier, on December 31, 1975, France had formally recognized the independence of Comoros (minus Mahoré), but active relations, including all aid programs, which amounted to more than 40 percent of the national budget, remained suspended.

The Soilih Regime

Originally an agronomist, Ali Soilih had become politically active as a supporter of RDPC leader Said Ibrahim in 1970. Lasting from January 1976 to May 1978, his rule was marked by continued hostility between France and Comoros. The main issues were the status of Mahoré (particularly after France held a second referendum on the island, on February 7, 1976, in which 99.4 percent of the voters endorsed continued status as a French department) and a radical reform program designed to break the hold of traditional values and French influence on Comoran life. Soilih envisioned accomplishing his revolution in three phases, beginning with independence from France. The second phase, a "social revolution," would abolish such customs as the wearing of veils, the costly *grand mariage* (great

wedding; in Swahili *ndola nkuu*), and traditional funeral ceremonies. Comoran citizens, including young women, would be mobilized to serve in revolutionary militia and army units in an attempt to create something resembling the Red Guards of China's Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s (see Society, this ch.). The third phase would decentralize government administration by establishing thirty-four local *moudirias*, or provinces. These would serve not only as administrative centers but would also provide post and telephone service and consumer goods for localities of about 9,000 people on the model of the Chinese people's communes.

Soilih emphasized the central role of young people in the revolution, lowering the voting age to fourteen. He mobilized Comoran youth into a special revolutionary militia (the Commando Moissy), which, particularly in the villages, launched violent attacks on conservative elders in Red Guard style (see Comoros, ch. 6).

After the withdrawal of French financial subsidies, the treasury was soon emptied, and in a move having budgetary as well as ideological implications, some 3,500 civil servants were dismissed in 1977. Soilih made a more than symbolic break with the past in 1976 by burning French government archives, which had been kept since the acquisition of Mahoré 135 years before. Tanzanian officers trained the Comoran Armed Forces, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Saudi Arabia, and other countries provided limited aid.

Soilih, who described himself as a devout Muslim, advocated a secular state and limitations on the privileges of the muftis, or Muslim jurists who interpret Islamic law. These reforms, which were perceived as attacks on Comoran traditions, combined with a deepening economic crisis to erode support for his government. Several attempts were made on Soilih's life, and in a referendum held in October 1977, only 55 percent of the voters supported a new constitution proposed by his government. Attacks by the Moissy on real and imagined political opponents escalated; raids on mosques were common; a number of refugees fled to Mahoré. The eruption of Kartala in April 1977 and the influx of refugees from Madagascar following a massacre of resident Comorans there exacerbated the situation. In March 1978, some fishers in the town of Iconi, south of Moroni, were killed after protesting the government's policy on compulsory sale of their catch to the state. Severe food shortages in 1976–77 required the government to seek aid internationally and

forced the young nation to divert its already limited export earnings from economic development to purchases of rice and other staples.

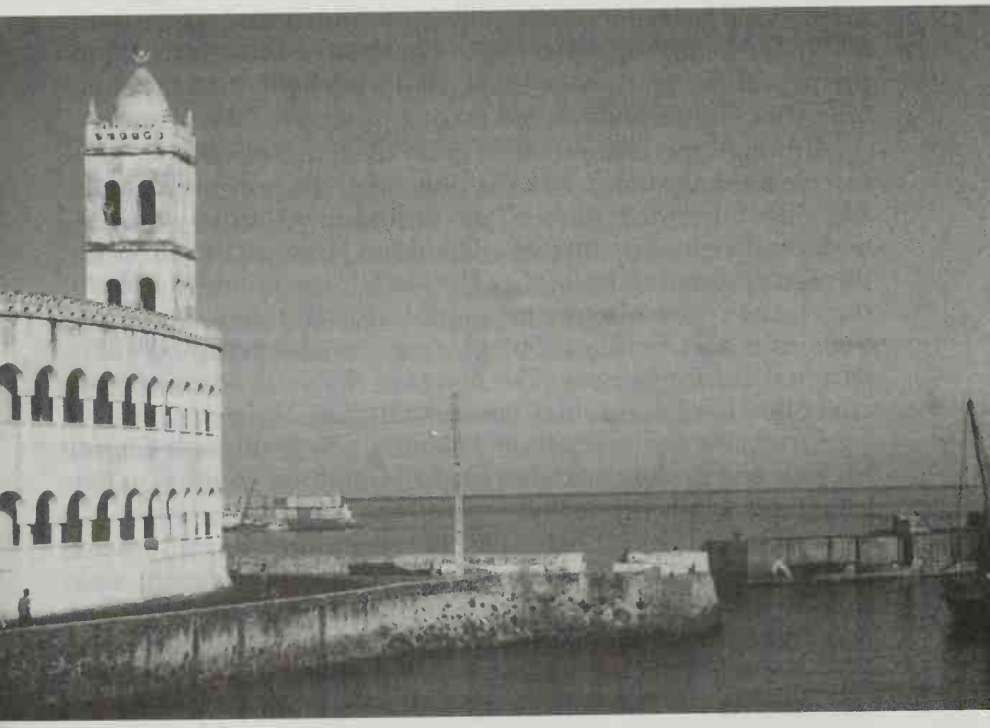
Popular support had dwindled to such a level that when a mercenary force of fifty, consisting largely of former French paratroopers, landed at Itsandra Beach north of the capital on May 12, 1978 the regular armed forces offered no resistance. The mercenaries were led by French-born Bob Denard (an alias for Gilbert Bourgeaud, also known as Said Mustapha M'Hadjou) a veteran of wars of revolution, counterrevolution, and separatism from Indochina to Biafra. (Ironically, Denard had played a role in the 1975 coup that had enabled Soilih to come to power.) Most Comorans supported the coup and were happy to be free of Soilih's ineffective and repressive regime. The deposed head of state was killed under mysterious circumstances on May 29, 1978. The official explanation was that he had attempted to escape.

The Abdallah Regime

Following a few days of provisional government, the two men who had financed the coup, former president Ahmed Abdallah (himself the victim of the 1975 coup) and former vice president Mohamed Ahmed, returned to Moroni from exile in Paris and installed themselves as joint presidents. Soon after, Abdallah was named sole executive.

The continued presence of the mercenaries impeded Abdallah's early efforts to stabilize Comoros. Denard seemed interested in remaining in Comoros, and he and his friends were given financially rewarding appointments with the new government. In reaction to Denard's involvement with Abdallah, the OAU revoked Comoros' OAU membership, Madagascar severed diplomatic relations, and the United Nations (UN) threatened economic sanctions against the regime. France also exerted pressure for Denard to leave, and in late September—temporarily, as it developed—he departed the islands.

Abdallah consolidated power, beginning with the writing of a new constitution. The document combined federalism and centralism. It granted each island its own legislature and control over taxes levied on individuals and businesses resident on the island (perhaps with an eye to rapprochement with Mahoré), while reserving strong executive powers for the president. It also restored Islam as the state religion, while acknowledging the rights of those who did not observe the Muslim



Port at Moroni, Njazidja, capital of Comoros
Friday mosque and port, Moroni
Courtesy Mari G. Borstelmann

faith. The new constitution was approved by 99 percent of Comoran voters on October 1, 1978. The Comorans also elected Abdallah to a six-year term as president of what was now known as the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros.

Although Abdallah had been president when Comoros broke away from France in 1975, he now moved to establish a relationship much more to France's liking. Upon Denard's departure, he gave a French military mission responsibility for training Comoros' defense force. He also signed an agreement with France to allow its navy full use of Comoran port facilities.

Making the most of Comoros' new presidential system, Abdallah induced the nation's National Assembly to enact a twelve-year ban on political parties, a move that guaranteed his reelection in 1984. In 1979 his government arrested Soilih regime members who had not already left or been killed during the 1978 coup. Four former ministers of the Soilih government disappeared and allegedly were murdered, and about 300 other Soilih supporters were imprisoned without trial. For the next three years, occasional trials were held, in many cases only after France had insisted on due process for the prisoners.

Although the restoration of good relations with France represented a sharp break with the policies of the previous regime, Abdallah built on Soilih's efforts to find new sources of diplomatic and economic support. Thanks in large part to aid from the European Community (EC—see Glossary) and the Arab states, the regime began to upgrade roads, telecommunications, and port facilities. The government also accepted international aid for programs to increase the cultivation of cash crops and food for domestic consumption. Abdallah endeavored to maintain the relations established by Soilih with China, Nigeria, and Tanzania, and to expand Comoros' contacts in the Islamic world with visits to Libya and the Persian Gulf states.

Despite international assistance, economic development was slow. Although some Comorans blamed the French, who had yet to restore technical assistance to pre-1975 levels, others suspected that Abdallah, who owned a large import-export firm, was enriching himself from development efforts with the assistance of Denard, who continued to visit Comoros.

Opposition to the Abdallah regime began to appear as early as 1979, with the formation of an exile-dominated group that became known as the United National Front of Comorans-Union of Comorans (Front National Uni des Komoriens-Union des Komoriens—FNUK-Unikom). In 1980 the Comoran

ambassador to France, Said Ali Kemal, resigned his position to form another opposition group, the National Committee for Public Safety (Comité National de Salut Public). A failed coup in February 1981, led by a former official of the Soilih regime, resulted in arrests of about forty people.

In regard to Mahoré, Abdallah offered little more than verbal resistance to a 1979 decision of the French government to postpone action on the status of the island until 1984. At the same time, he kept the door open to Mahoré by writing a large measure of autonomy for the component islands of the republic into the 1978 constitution and by appointing a Mahorais as his government's minister of finance. Having established an administration that, in comparison with the Soilih years, seemed tolerable to his domestic and international constituencies, Abdallah proceeded to entrench himself. He did this through domestic and international policies that would profoundly compromise Comoros' independence and create the chronic crisis that continued to characterize Comoran politics and government in 1994.

The Undermining of the Political Process

In February 1982, Comoros became a one-party state. The government designated Abdallah's newly formed Comoran Union for Progress (Union Comorienne pour le Progrès—UCP) as the republic's sole political party. Although unaffiliated individuals could run for local and national office, the only party that could organize on behalf of candidates henceforth would be the UCP. In March 1982 elections, all but one of Abdallah's handpicked UCP candidates won. UCP candidates likewise dominated the May 1983 National Assembly elections, and opposition candidates attempting to stand for election in balloting for the three islands' legislative councils in July were removed from the lists by the Ministry of Interior. Abdallah himself was elected to a second six-year term as head of state in September 1984, winning more than 99 percent of the vote as the sole candidate. During the National Assembly elections of March 22, 1987, the Abdallah regime arrested 400 poll watchers from opposition groups. A state radio announcement that one non-UCP delegate had been elected was retracted the next day.

Abdallah also kept opponents from competing with him in the arena of legitimate politics by reshuffling his government and amending the 1978 constitution. As part of what one

observer wryly called the process of "remov[ing] his most avid successors from temptation," Abdallah pushed through a constitutional amendment in 1985 that abolished the post of prime minister, a move that made the president both head of state and head of the elected government. The amendment also diminished the status of Ali Mroudjae, the erstwhile prime minister and a likely future candidate for president. Another 1985 amendment took away many of the powers of the president of the National Assembly, including his right to become interim head of state in the event of the incumbent's death. The amendment transferred the right of succession to the president of the Supreme Court, an appointee of the head of state. Feeling the effect of this second amendment was assembly president Mohamed Taki, another man generally regarded as presidential timber.

Mroudjae's subsequent career in the Abdallah government illustrated the way in which Abdallah used frequent reshufflings of his cabinet to eliminate potential challengers. Mroudjae's next job was to share duties as minister of state with four other people; he was removed from the government altogether in another reshuffle four months later.

Looking to the end of his second (and, according to the constitution, final) term as head of state, Abdallah created a commission in 1988 to recommend changes to the constitution. These changes, among other things, would permit him to run yet again in 1990. A referendum on revisions to the constitution was scheduled for November 4, 1989.

A weak, divided, and opportunistic opposition facilitated Abdallah's efforts to undermine the political process. The character of Comoran politics ensured that opposition would be sustained by an unwieldy group of strong personalities. As the personal stock of these would-be leaders rose and fell, coalitions coalesced and just as quickly fell apart in a process that engendered distrust and cynicism. The ban on opposition political organizations at home—brutally upheld, when necessary, by the Presidential Guard (Garde Présidentielle—GP) and the Comoran military—further undercut efforts to organize against the head of state. The French government's displeasure at intrigues of Comoran exiles in Paris also complicated opposition efforts.

Given the absence of an ideological basis for resisting the regime, it was also not surprising that some opposition leaders were willing to ally themselves with the head of state if such a

move appeared likely to advance them personally. For example, Mouzaoir Abdallah, leader of the opposition Union for a Democratic Republic in Comoros (Union pour une République Démocratique aux Comores—URDC), appeared with the president at independence day celebrations in July 1988 amid rumors that the URDC chief was being considered for a reconstituted prime minister's office. In September 1988, another opposition leader, Said Hachim, agreed to join the commission considering revisions to the constitution.

The credibility of Abdallah's opponents was also damaged by the efforts of one opposition leader, former ambassador to France Said Ali Kemal, to recruit mercenaries to help overthrow the Abdallah government. Arrested in Australia in late 1983, six of the mercenaries gave testimony discrediting Kemal.

Mercenary Rule

Abdallah complemented his political maneuvers by employing a GP officered by many of the same mercenaries who had helped him take power in 1978. Denard led this force, and also became heavily involved in Comoran business activities, sometimes acting in partnership with President Abdallah or as a front for South African business interests, which played a growing role in the Comoran economy during the Abdallah regime.

Although Denard had made a ceremonial departure from Comoros following the 1978 coup, by the early 1980s he was again openly active in the islands. The GP, whose numbers were reported to range from 300 to 700 members, primarily indigenous Comorans, were led by about thirty French and Belgian mercenaries, mostly comrades of Denard's in the post-World War II conflicts that accompanied the decolonization of Africa and Asia. Answerable only to the president, the GP operated outside the chain of command of the French-trained 1,000-member Comoran Armed Forces, a situation that caused resentment among the regular military, Comoran citizens, and other African states.

The GP's primary missions were to protect the president and to deter attempts to overthrow his government. During the July 1983 elections to the three islands' legislative councils, the GP beat and arrested demonstrators protesting the republic's single-party system. During elections to the National Assembly in March 1987, the GP—which had become known as *les affreux*, "the frighteners"—replaced several hundred dissident poll watchers who had been arrested by the army. On March 8,

1985, one of the most serious attempts to overthrow the Abdallah government began as a mutiny by about thirty Comoran troops of the GP against their European officers. The disaffected guards had formed ties to the Democratic Front (Front Démocratique—FD), one of the more nationalistic of the republic's many banned political parties. The mutiny was quickly squelched; three of the rebellious guards were killed, and the rest were taken prisoners.

President Abdallah used the uprising as an opportunity to round up dissidents, primarily FD members, whose leadership denied involvement in the coup attempt. Later in 1985, seventy-seven received convictions; seventeen, including the FD's secretary general, Mustapha Said Cheikh, were sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor. Most of the prisoners were released in 1986 following Amnesty International charges of illegal arrests, torture, and other abuses. France had also exerted pressure by temporarily withholding new aid projects and purchases of Comoran vanilla.

Perhaps the most notorious action of the GP on behalf of the Abdallah government occurred in November 1987. After an apparent attempt by dissidents to free some political prisoners, an event quickly labeled a coup attempt by the Abdallah regime, the GP arrested fourteen alleged plotters and tortured seven of them to death. Officials of the Comoran government apparently were not allowed to participate in the prisoners' interrogation. President Abdallah was on a state visit to Egypt at the time.

With Abdallah's acquiescence and occasional participation, Denard and the other GP officers used their connections to the head of state to make themselves important players in the Comoran economy. Denard was a part owner of Établissements Abdallah et Fils, Comoros' largest import-export firm, whose primary owner was President Abdallah. Denard also owned and operated a highly profitable commercial shuttle between South Africa and Comoros, and owned Sogecom, a private security firm with contracts to protect South African hotels being built in the islands.

The GP officers, sympathetic to South Africa's apartheid government, established themselves as a conduit of South African investment and influence in Comoros. An official South African trade representative conceded that a number of his country's investment projects, including a 525-hectare experimental farm, housing, road construction, and a medical evacu-

ation program, were brokered and managed by guard officers at the mercenaries' insistence.

The GP also arranged for South African commercial aircraft to fly in the Middle East and parts of Africa under the aegis of the Comoran national airline, in contravention of international sanctions against South Africa. Furthermore, the GP provided for South African use of Comoran territory as a base for intelligence gathering in the Mozambique Channel and as a staging area for the shipment of arms to rightist rebels in Mozambique. The GP was widely understood to be funded by South Africa, at the rate of about US$3 million per year.

Comoros as Client State: The Economics of Abdallah

President Abdallah generally put his personal interests ahead of national interests in making economic policy. The result was the creation of a client state whose meager and unpredictable cash crop earnings were supplemented with increasing infusions of foreign aid.

Throughout the 1980s, export earnings from Comoros' four main cash crops—vanilla, ylang-ylang, cloves, and copra—experienced a wrenching sequence of booms and collapses because of weather and market factors, or else steadily dwindled. The regime's principal form of response was to apply the president's considerable diplomatic skills to developing an extensive network of governments and international organizations willing to extend loans and donate aid. The main suppliers were France, South Africa, the EC, the conservative Arab states, the World Bank (see Glossary) and related organs, and regional financial institutions such as the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and the African Development Bank. Some assistance went to projects of indisputable value, such as efforts to create independent news media and improve telephone communications with the outside world. Much of the aid, however, was questionable—for example, loans and grants to help the republic meet the payroll for its oversized civil service. Other more plausible projects, such as the protracted development of a seaport at the town of Mutsamudu, construction of paved ring roads linking each island's coastal settlements, and the building of power stations, nonetheless tended to be instances of placing the cart before the horse. That is, capital-intensive improvements to infrastructure had not been coordinated with local development projects; hence, little, if any, domestic commerce existed to benefit from road

networks, electrical power, and world-class port facilities. The importation of huge quantities of building materials and construction equipment provided immediate benefits to import-export firms in the islands, of which Établissements Abdallah et Fils was the largest. In the meantime, the projects were of little immediate use to Comorans and were likely to go underused for years to come.

Throughout the Abdallah period, rice imports drained as much as 50 percent of Comoran export earnings. Projects to increase food self-sufficiency, as one observer noted, "fail[ed] to respond to the largesse" provided by international sponsors such as the European Development Fund and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The president joined with vanilla growers in resisting international pressure to divert vanilla-producing land to the cultivation of corn and rice for domestic consumption. He also declined to heed World Bank advice to impose tariffs and domestic taxes on imported rice. Abdallah's import-export firm was heavily involved in vanilla exports, as well as in the importation of Far Eastern rice at three times its price at the source.

Abdallah's firm, whose co-owners included Denard and Kalfane and Company, a Pakistani concern, also profited from managing the importation of materials used by South African firms in developing tourist hotels. Little of the material used in building these resorts was of Comoran origin. Also, once completed, the resorts would be almost entirely owned and managed by non-Comorans. Although tourism, mainly by South Africans who were unwelcome in other African resorts, was widely considered the only promising new industry in Comoros, Abdallah guided its development so that resorts benefited few Comorans other than himself and his associates.

Under Abdallah's tutelage, the Comoran economy finished the 1980s much as it had started the decade—poor, underdeveloped, and dependent on export earnings from cash crops of unpredictable and generally declining value. The critical difference, with enormous implications for the republic's capacity to have some say in its own destiny, was its new status as a nation abjectly in debt. By 1988, the last full year of the Abdallah regime, 80 percent of annual public expenditures were funded by external aid (see Economy, this ch.).

The Demise of Abdallah, 1989

Only weeks before the violent end of the Abdallah regime in late 1989, one observer noted that "Comoros is still run like a

village, with a handful of tough men in charge and supported by foreign aid." As Comorans prepared for a November 4, 1989, referendum on constitutional changes that would enable President Abdallah to run for a third term in 1990, human rights remained in precarious condition, and the only avenue of economic advancement for most islanders—the civil service—faced cutbacks at the urging of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary). Even those who would keep their government jobs, however, were not guaranteed economic security. As often occurred whenever export earnings slid, civil servants had not been paid since midsummer.

The official result of the referendum was a 92.5 percent majority in favor of the amendments proposed by Abdallah, which now created "the conditions for a life presidency," warned one opposition leader. Balloting was marked by the now customary manipulation by the government. Opposition groups reported that polling places lacked private voting booths, government officials blocked the entry of opposition poll watchers, and the army and police removed ballot boxes before voting ended. Reaction to these abuses was unusually angry. In Njazidja voters smashed ballot boxes rather than have them carted away by the army; the governor's office was set on fire in Nzwani, and a bomb was found outside the home of the minister of finance in Moroni. More than 100 people were arrested following the election, and in subsequent weeks the international media described a deteriorating situation in the islands; the head of state claimed that France "authorizes terrorism in the Comoros," and leaders of the banned opposition in bold public statements questioned the legitimacy of the referendum.

President Abdallah was shot to death on the night of November 26–27, reportedly while asleep in his residence, the Beit el Salama (House of Peace). At first his death was seen as a logical outcome of the tense political situation following what was, in effect, his self-appointment as head of state for life. The recently dismissed head of the Comoran military was duly blamed for the murder.

Evidence emerged subsequently that Abdallah's assassination resulted from the late president's proposed actions with regard to the GP. In September 1989, Abdallah had engaged a French military consultant, who determined that the GP should be absorbed into the regular army. Following consulta-

tions among Abdallah, the French government, and South Africa's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a decision was made to expel Denard and his fellow officers of the GP by the end of 1989. Denard and his second in command were seen walking with Abdallah only hours before he died. Although the mercenary initially blamed the assassination on the Comoran army, he later conceded that he was in Abdallah's office when the president was killed, but called the shooting "an accident due to the general state of mayhem" in the Beit el Salama (see Political Dynamics, this ch.).

Two days later, on November 29, the real reasons for the assassination emerged when Denard and the GP seized control of the government in a coup. Twenty-seven police officers were killed, hundreds of people were arrested, and all journalists were confined to their hotels. The mercenaries disarmed the regular army, ousted provisional president Haribon Chebani, who as chief of the Supreme Court had succeeded Abdallah, and installed Mohamed Said Djohar, who just three days earlier had become chief of the Supreme Court, as Comoros' third president in less than a week.

The immediate reaction of the republic's two main supporters, France and South Africa, was to isolate Denard. South Africa, admitting years of funding of the GP, cut off all aid. France began a military build-up on Mahoré and likewise suspended aid. On December 7, anti-Denard demonstrations by about 1,000 students and workers were violently broken up by the protests. By then the islands' school system had shut down, and the civil service had gone on strike. Faced with an untenable situation, Denard surrendered to French forces without a fight on December 15. Along with about two dozen comrades, he was flown to Pretoria and put under house arrest. The French government later announced that Denard would remain in detention in South Africa pending the outcome of a French judicial inquiry into Abdallah's death. In February 1993, he returned to France, where he was initially arrested, tried, and exonerated of involvement in the death of Abdallah.

The Issue of Mahoré

One of the touchiest issues in the negotiations between Comoros and France over independence in the early 1970s had been whether the 1974 referendum would be considered for the Comoros archipelago as a whole or on an island-by-island basis. Opposition to independence on Mahoré was organized

by the Mayotte Popular Movement (Mouvement Populaire Mahorais—MPM), an organization that had been founded in the 1960s by Zeina M'Dere, a spokeswoman for Mahoré shopkeepers, mostly women, who had been affected economically when the colonial capital was moved from the Mahoré town of Dzaoudzi to Moroni on Njazidja in 1962.

The reasons behind Mahoré's 65 percent vote against independence were several. First, the people of Mahoré considered themselves culturally, religiously, and linguistically distinct from those of the other three islands; they felt that their long association with France (since 1841) had given their island a distinct Creole character like that of Reunion or Seychelles. Second, given Mahoré's smaller population, greater natural resources, and higher standard of living, the Mahorais thought that their island would be economically viable within a French union and ought not to be brought down to the level of the other three poorer islands. Third, most Mahorais apparently felt that Mahoré's future within a Comoran state would not be a comfortable one, given a perception of neglect that had begun with the much resented transfer of the capital.

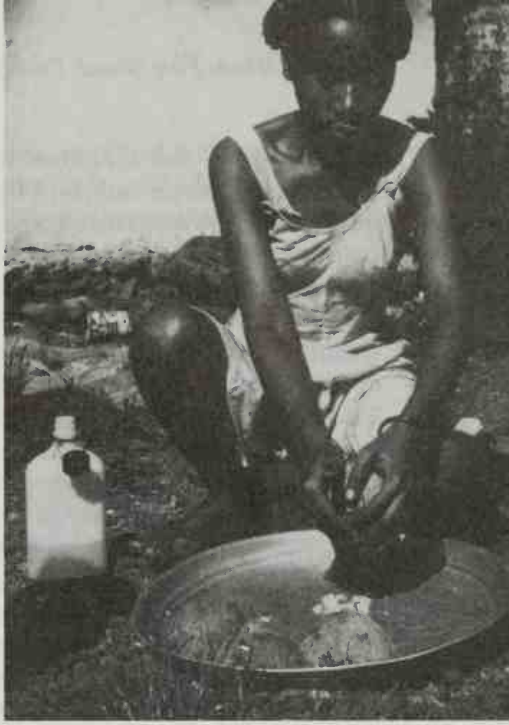
In France and among conservatives on Reunion, the 1974 vote on Mahoré in favor of continued association with France was greeted with great enthusiasm. Comoran leaders, in contrast, accused the MPM and its leader, Marcel Henri, of fabricating the illusion of Mahorais "uniqueness" to preserve the power of Mahoré's non-Muslim, Creole elite. The issue poisoned Comoran relations with France, particularly because the Indian Ocean lobby, whose leaders included Reunion's deputy to the French National Assembly, Michel Debré, pushed for a "Mayotte française" (French Mayotte). Apparently leaning toward the interpretation that the December 1974 referendum was an island-by-island plebiscite, the French legislature voted in June 1975 to postpone independence for six months and hold a second referendum. The Abdallah government responded by declaring independence unilaterally on July 6, 1975, for all Comoro Islands, including Mahoré. France reacted by cutting off financial aid, which provided 41 percent of the national budget. Fearing a Comoran attempt to assert control of Mahoré forcibly, France sent members of the Foreign Legion from Reunion and a fleet of three vessels to patrol the waters around the island on July 6-7. On November 12, 1975, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution giving

Comoros UN membership and recognized its claims to Mahoré, which France opposed.

French policy toward Mahoré had been, in the words of one observer, "to cultivate a more or less honest majority for reunification among the uncooperative Mahorais," particularly after the forthrightly anti-French regime of Ali Soilih ended in 1978. By contrast, the Mahorais' objective appeared to be full departmental status such as that of Reunion, where residents enjoyed full rights as French citizens. In a 1976 referendum, the Mahorais expressed dissatisfaction with their status as an overseas territory. France then created a new classification for Mahoré—territorial community (*collectivité territoriale*)—under which Mahoré was administered by a prefect appointed by the French government. Local government consisted of a popularly elected seventeen-member General Council. The island was entitled to send elected representatives to Paris, one each to the National Assembly and the Senate. The French franc served as the currency of the island. This status still applied in 1994.

After it appeared that Mahoré would not be tempted by the federalist design of Ahmed Abdallah's 1978 constitution to join the Republic of the Comoros, the National Assembly in Paris decided in 1979 to prolong the existence of the *collectivité territoriale* until a 1984 plebiscite, resolving meanwhile to study the situation and consult with the islanders. In late 1984, with an overwhelming vote to remain associated with France in the offing, the French government postponed the plebiscite indefinitely. By mid-1994, it had still not been held, the Mahorais apparently still eager to remain part of France and as disinclined as ever to reunite with the three troubled islands to their immediate west.

Although many politically conservative French relished the Mahorais' popular vow that *nous resterons français pour rester libre* ("we will remain French to remain free"), the Mahoré situation caused some discomfort for France internationally. Every year, resolutions calling on France to relinquish Mahoré to Comoros passed with near unanimity in the UN, and the OAU likewise issued annual condemnations. Although Comoran official distaste for the situation became more muted in the 1980s and 1990s, the Comoran government continued to draw French attention to the issue. In May 1990, newly elected president Said Mohamed Djohar called for peaceful dialogue and French review of Mahoré's status. But feeling obligated not to change



Woman grinding coconuts, a staple food
Courtesy
Mari G. Borstelmann

Women and children in front of houses on Mwali
Courtesy
Mari G. Borstelmann

the Mahorais' status against their will, the French could do little. Anti-Comoran riots and demonstrations, and the formation of an anti-immigrant paramilitary group on Mahoré in response to the presence of illegal Comoran immigrants, were also sources of embarrassment to France.

The economy of Mahoré in some ways resembles that of Comoros. Rice, cassava, and corn are cultivated for domestic consumption; ylang-ylang and vanilla are the primary exports. The main imports, whose value far outstrips that of exports, are foodstuffs, machinery and appliances, transport equipment, and metals. Construction, primarily of French-funded public works, is the only industrial activity.

A five-year development plan (1986–91) focused on large-scale public projects, principally construction of a deepwater port at Longoni and an airport at the capital, Dzaoudzi. The plan and its two main projects were later extended through 1993. Despite Mahoré's great natural beauty, tourism has been inhibited by a dearth of hotel rooms and the island's isolated location.

Under French administration, Mahoré generally enjoyed domestic peace and stability, although tensions appeared to be rising by the early 1990s. In the summer of 1991, the relocation of people from their homes to allow the expansion of the airport met with vociferous protests, mostly by young people. The protests soon grew into violent demonstrations against the local government's administration of the island. Paramilitary attacks on Comoran immigrants occurred in June 1992, and a February 1993 general strike for higher wages ended in rioting. Security forces from Reunion and France were called in to restore order.

Physical Environment

The Comoros archipelago consists of four main islands aligned along a northwest-southeast axis at the north end of the Mozambique Channel, between Mozambique and the island of Madagascar (see fig.6). Still widely known by their French names, the islands are officially called by their Swahili names by the Comoran government. They are Njazidja (Grande Comore), Mwali (Mohéli), Nzwani (Anjouan), and Mahoré (Mayotte). The islands' distance from each other—Njazidja is some 200 kilometers from Mahoré, forty kilometers from Mwali, and eighty kilometers from Nzwani—and a lack of

good harbor facilities make transportation and communication difficult. The islands have a total land area of 2,236 square kilometers (including Mahoré) and claim territorial waters that extend 320 kilometers offshore.

Njazidja is the largest island, sixty-seven kilometers long and twenty-seven kilometers wide, with a total area of 1,146 square kilometers. The most recently formed of the four islands in the archipelago, it is also of volcanic origin. Two volcanoes form the island's most prominent topographic features: La Grille in the north, with an elevation of 1,000 meters, is extinct and largely eroded; Kartala in the south, rising to a height of 2,361 meters, last erupted in 1977. A plateau averaging 600 to 700 meters high connects the two mountains. Because Njazidja is geologically a relatively new island, its soil is thin and rocky and cannot hold water. As a result, water from the island's heavy rainfall must be stored in catchment tanks. There are no coral reefs along the coast, and the island lacks a good harbor for ships. One of the largest remnants of Comoros' once-extensive rain forests is on the slopes of Kartala. The national capital has been at Moroni since 1962.

Nzwani, triangular shaped and forty kilometers from apex to base, has an area of 424 square kilometers. Three mountain chains—Sima, Nioumakele, and Jimilime—emanate from a central peak, Mtingui (1,575 meters), giving the island its distinctive shape. Older than Njazidja, Nzwani has deeper soil cover, but overcultivation has caused serious erosion. A coral reef lies close to shore; the island's capital of Mutsamudu is also its main port.

Mwali is thirty kilometers long and twelve kilometers wide, with an area of 290 square kilometers. It is the smallest of the four islands and has a central mountain chain reaching 860 meters at its highest. Like Njazidja, it retains stands of rain forest. Mwali's capital is Fomboni.

Mahoré, geologically the oldest of the four islands, is thirty-nine kilometers long and twenty-two kilometers wide, totaling 375 square kilometers, and its highest points are between 500 and 600 meters above sea level. Because of greater weathering of the volcanic rock, the soil is relatively rich in some areas. A well-developed coral reef that encircles much of the island ensures protection for ships and a habitat for fish. Dzaoudzi, capital of Comoros until 1962 and now Mahoré's administrative center, is situated on a rocky outcropping off the east shore of the main island. Dzaoudzi is linked by a causeway to Île Pam-

anzi, which at ten square kilometers in area is the largest of several islets adjacent to Mahoré. Islets are also scattered in the coastal waters of Njazidja, Nzwani, and Mwali.

Comoran waters are the habitat of the coelacanth, a rare fish with limblike fins and a cartilaginous skeleton, the fossil remains of which date as far back as 400 million years and which was once thought to have become extinct about 70 million years ago. A live specimen was caught in 1938 off southern Africa; other coelacanths have since been found in the vicinity of the Comoro Islands.

Several mammals are unique to the islands themselves. The macao, a lemur found only on Mahoré, is protected by French law and by local tradition. Another, Livingstone's fruit bat, although plentiful when discovered by explorer David Livingstone in 1863, has been reduced to a population of about 120, entirely on Nzwani. The world's largest bat, the jet-black Livingstone fruit bat has a wingspan of nearly two meters. A British preservation group sent an expedition to Comoros in 1992 to bring some of the bats to Britain to establish a breeding population. Humboldt's flycatcher is perhaps the best known of the birds native to Comoros.

Partly in response to international pressures, Comorans in the 1990s have become more concerned about the environment. Steps are being taken not only to preserve the rare fauna, but also to counteract degradation of the environment, especially on densely populated Nzwani. Specifically, to minimize the cutting down of trees for fuel, kerosene is being subsidized, and efforts are being made to replace the loss of the forest cover caused by ylang-ylang distillation for perfume. The Community Development Support Fund, sponsored by the International Development Association (IDA—a World Bank affiliate—see Glossary) and the Comoran government, is working to improve water supply on the islands as well.

The climate is marine tropical, with two seasons: hot and humid from November to April, the result of the northeastern monsoon, and a cooler, drier season the rest of the year. Average monthly temperatures range from 23°C to 28°C along the coasts. Although the average annual precipitation is 2,000 millimeters, water is a scarce commodity in many parts of Comoros. Mwali and Mahoré possess streams and other natural sources of water, but Njazidja and Nzwani, whose mountainous landscapes retain water poorly, are almost devoid of naturally occurring running water. Cyclones, occurring during the hot and

wet season, can cause extensive damage, especially in coastal areas. On the average, at least twice each decade houses, farms, and harbor facilities are devastated by these great storms.

Society and Culture

Comoran society and culture reflect the influences of Islam and the traditions of East Africa. The former provides the basis for religion and law; the East African influence is evident in the language, a Swahili dialect, and in a number of pre-Islamic customs. Western, primarily French, influences are also prevalent, particularly in the modern educational sector, the civil service, and cultural affairs.

Population

The most recent official census by the Comoran government, conducted in 1991, put the islands' population, exclusive of Mahoré, at 446,817. Official counts put the population of Mahoré at 67,167 in 1985 and 94,410 in 1991—a 40 percent increase in just six years.

Average population density in Comoros was 183 persons per square kilometer in 1980. This figure concealed a great disparity between the republic's most crowded island, Nzwani, which had a density of 470 persons per square kilometer in 1991; Njazidja, which had a density of 250 persons per square kilometer in 1991; and Mwali, where the 1991 population density figure was 120 persons per square kilometer. Overall population density increased to about 285 persons per square kilometer by 1994. Mahoré's population density went from 179 persons per square kilometer in 1985 to 251 per square kilometer in 1991.

By comparison, estimates of the population density per square kilometer of the Indian Ocean's other island microstates ranged from 241 (Seychelles) to 690 (Maldives) in 1993. Given the rugged terrain of Njazidja and Nzwani, and the dedication of extensive tracts to agriculture on all three islands, population pressures on Comoros are becoming increasingly critical. A similar situation obtains on Mahoré.

The age structure of the population of Comoros is similar to that of many developing countries, in that the republic has a very large proportion of young people. In 1989, 46.4 percent of the population was under fifteen years of age, an above-average proportion even for sub-Saharan Africa. The population's rate of growth was a very high 3.5 percent per annum in the mid-

1980s, up substantially from 2.0 percent in the mid-1970s and 2.1 percent in the mid-1960s.

In 1983 the Abdallah regime borrowed US$2.85 million from the IDA to devise a national family planning program. However, Islamic reservations about contraception made forthright advocacy and implementation of birth control programs politically hazardous, and consequently little was done in the way of public policy (see Status of Women, this ch.).

The Comoran population has become increasingly urbanized in recent years. In 1991 the percentage of Comorans residing in cities and towns of more than 5,000 persons was about 30 percent, up from 25 percent in 1985 and 23 percent in 1980. Comoros' largest cities were the capital, Moroni, with about 30,000 people, and the port city of Mutsamudu, on the island of Nzwani, with about 20,000 people. Mahoré's capital, Dzaoudzi, had a population of 5,865 according to the 1985 census; the island's largest town, Mamoudzou, had 12,026 people.

Migration among the various islands is relatively small. Natives of Njazidja often settle in less crowded Mwali, and before independence people from Nzwani commonly moved to Mahoré. In 1977 Mahoré expelled peasants from Njazidja and Nzwani who had recently settled in large numbers on the island. Some were allowed to reenter starting in 1981 but solely as migrant laborers.

The number of Comorans living abroad has been estimated at between 80,000 and 100,000; most of them live in Tanzania, Madagascar, and other parts of East Africa. The number of Comorans residing in Madagascar was drastically reduced after anti-Comoran rioting in December 1976 in Mahajanga, in which at least 1,400 Comorans were killed. As many as 17,000 Comorans left Madagascar to seek refuge in their native land in 1977 alone. About 40,000 Comorans live in France; many of them had gone there for a university education and never returned. Small numbers of Indians, Malagasy, South Africans, and Europeans live on the islands and play an important role in the economy.

Society

The Comoran people are a blend of African, Arab, and Malayo-Indonesian elements. A few small communities, primarily in Mahoré, speak *kibushi*, a Malagasy dialect. The principal Comoran Swahili dialect, written in Arabic script, is related to the Swahili spoken in East Africa but is not easily intelligible to

East African Swahili speakers. Classical Arabic is significant for religious reasons, and French remains the principal language with which the Republic of the Comoros communicates with the rest of the world.

A number of ethnically distinguishable groups are found: the Arabs, descendants of Shirazi settlers, who arrived in significant numbers in the fifteenth century; the Cafres, an African group that settled on the islands before the coming of the Shirazi; a second African group, the Makoa, descendants of slaves brought by the Arabs from the East African coast; and three groups of Malayo-Indonesian peoples—the Oimatsaha, the Antalotes, and the Sakalava, the latter having settled largely on Mahoré. Intermarriage has tended to blur the distinctions among these groups, however. Creoles, descendants of French settlers who intermarried with the indigenous peoples, form a tiny but politically influential group on Mahoré, numbering no more than about 100 on that island. They are predominantly Roman Catholic and mainly cultivate small plantations. In addition, a small group of people descended in part from the Portuguese sailors who landed on the Comoro Islands at the beginning of the sixteenth century are reportedly living around the town of Tsangadjou on the east coast of Njazidja.

Shirazi Arab royal clans dominated the islands socially, culturally, and politically from the fifteenth century until the French occupation. Eleven such clans lived on Njazidja, where their power was strongest, and their leaders, the sultans or sharifs, who claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, were in a continual state of war until the French occupation. Two similar clans were located on Nzwani, and these clans maintained vassals on Mahoré and Mwali after the Sakalava wiped out the local nobles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although the clan system was weakened by the economic and social dislocations of the colonial era, the descendants of clan nobles continue to form a major portion of the educated and propertied classes. The pre-independence rivalry of Said Mohamed Cheikh and Prince Said Ibrahim, leaders, respectively, of the conservative Parti Vert and the Parti Blanc, was interpreted by some as a revival of old clan antagonisms. Yet many descendants of nobles live in poverty and apparently have less influence socially and politically on Nzwani than on Njazidja.

The present-day elite, although composed in part of those of noble ancestry who took advantage of the opportunities of

the cash crop economy established by the French, is mainly defined in terms of wealth rather than caste or descent. This focus on wealth is not unusual, considering that the original Shirazi settlers themselves were traders and that the precolonial sultans were actively involved in commerce. Conspicuous consumption continues to mark the lifestyle of the elite.

Especially well regarded are those individuals who hold the *grand mariage*, often after a lifetime of scrimping and saving. This wedding ceremony, which can cost as much as the equivalent of US$20,000 to US$30,000, involves an exchange of expensive gifts between the couple's families and feasts for an entire village. Although the gift giving and dancing that accompany the *grand mariage* have helped perpetuate indigenous arts in silversmithing, goldsmithing, folk song, and folk dance, the waste involved has disastrous consequences for an economy already short on domestic resources. A ban or curb on the *grand mariage* was on the agenda of many reformers in the period preceding the radical regime of Ali Soilih, who himself had taken the almost unheard-of step of declining to participate in the ritual. However, the efforts of the Soilih government to restrict the custom aroused great resentment, and it was restored to its preeminent place in Comoran society almost immediately after Soilih was deposed in 1978.

Although its expense limits the number of families that can provide their sons and daughters a *grand mariage*, the ritual is still used as a means of distinguishing Comoran society's future leaders. Only by participating in the ceremony is a Comoran man entitled to participate in his village's assembly of notables and to wear the *mharuma*, a sash that entitles him to enter the mosque by a special door. Few, if any, candidates win election to the National Assembly without a *grand mariage* in their pasts. For these reasons in particular, critics of traditional Comoran society condemn the *grand mariage* as a means of excluding people of modest resources from participating in the islands' political life.

Those who can afford the pilgrimage to Mecca are also accorded prestige. The imams who lead prayers in mosques form a distinct elite group.

Despite the weakening of the position of the Shirazi elite, one observer reports that in many subtle ways old distinctions persist. The descendants of slaves, formally emancipated in 1904, are mostly sharecroppers or squatters, working the land that belonged to their ancestors' former owners, although

Grand mosque, Nzwani
Courtesy Brian Kensley

some have gone abroad as migrant laborers (a greatly restricted option since Madagascar's expulsion of thousands of Comorans in the late 1970s). Men of "freeborn" families choose "freeborn" wives, holding, if possible, a *grand mariage*; but if they take second wives, these women often are of slave ancestry.

Status of Women

Among men who can afford it, the preferred form of marriage appears to be polygyny with matrilocal residence. Although the first marriage is formally initiated with the *grand mariage* when possible, subsequent unions involve much simpler ceremonies. The result is that a man will establish two or even more households and will alternate residence between them, a reflection, most likely, of the trading origins of the Shirazi elite who maintained wives at different trading posts. Said Mohamed Djohar, elected president in 1990, had two wives, one in Njazidja and the other in Nzwani, an arrangement said to have broadened his appeal to voters. For men, divorce is easy, although by custom a divorced wife retains the family home.

Islamic law recognizes only male ownership and inheritance of land. In Comoros, however, certain landholdings called *magnahouli* are controlled by women and inherited through the female line, apparently in observance of a surviving matriarchal African tradition.

Despite their lower economic status, women married to farmers or laborers often move about more freely than their counterparts among the social elite, managing market stands or working in the fields. On Mwali, where traditional Islamic values are less dominant, women generally are not as strictly secluded. Women constituted 40.4 percent of the work force in 1990, a figure slightly above average for sub-Saharan Africa.

Girls are somewhat less likely than boys to attend school in Comoros. The World Bank estimated in 1993 that 67 percent of girls were enrolled in primary schools, whereas 82 percent of boys were enrolled. In secondary school, 15 percent of eligible Comoran girls were in attendance, in comparison with about 19 percent of eligible boys.

Although the 1992 constitution recognizes their right to suffrage, as did the 1978 constitution, women otherwise play a limited role in politics in Comoros. By contrast, in Mahoré female merchants sparked the movement for continued associ-

ation with France, and later, for continued separation from the Republic of the Comoros (see The Issue of Mahoré, this ch.).

Comoros accepted international aid for family planning in 1983, but it was considered politically inexpedient to put any plans into effect. According to a 1993 estimate, there were 6.8 births per woman in Comoros. By contrast, the figure was 6.4 births per woman for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa (see Population, this ch.).

In one of Comoran society's first acknowledgments of women as a discrete interest group, the Abdallah government organized a seminar, "Women, Family, and Development," in 1986. Despite participants' hopes that programs for family planning and female literacy would be announced, conference organizers stressed the role of women in agriculture and family life. Women fared slightly better under the Djohar regime. In February 1990, while still interim president, Djohar created a cabinet-level Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs, and appointed a woman, Ahlonkoba Aithnard, to head it. She lasted until a few weeks after Djohar's election to the presidency in March, when her ministry was reorganized out of existence, along with several others. Another female official, Situ Mohamed, was named to head the second-tier Ministry of Population and Women's Affairs, in August 1991. She lost her position—and the subministry was eliminated—hardly a week later, in one of President Djohar's routine ministerial reshufflings. Djohar made another nod to women in February 1992, when he invited representatives of an interest group, the Women's Federation, to take part in discussions on what would become the constitution of 1992. Women apparently organized and participated in a large demonstration critical of French support of the Djohar regime in October 1992, following government suppression of a coup attempt.

Religion and Education

Islam and its institutions help to integrate Comoran society and provide an identification with a world beyond the islands' shores. As Sunni Muslims, the people follow religious observances conscientiously and strictly adhere to religious orthodoxy. During the period of colonization, the French did not attempt to supplant Islamic customs and practices and were careful to respect the precedents of Islamic law as interpreted by the Shafii school (one of the four major legal schools in Sunni Islam, named after Muhammad ibn Idris ash Shafii, it

stresses reasoning by analogy). Hundreds of mosques dot the islands.

Practically all children attend Quranic school for two or three years, starting around age five; there they learn the rudiments of the Islamic faith and some classical Arabic. When rural children attend these schools, they sometimes move away from home and help the teacher work his land.

France established a system of primary and secondary schools based on the French model, which remains largely in place. Comoran law requires all children to complete nine years of schooling between the ages of seven and sixteen. The system provides six years of primary education for students ages seven to twelve, followed by seven years of secondary school. In recent years, enrollment has expanded greatly, particularly at the primary level. About 20,750 pupils, or roughly 75 percent of primary-school-age children were enrolled in 1993, up from about 46 percent in the late 1970s. About 17 percent of the secondary-school-age population was enrolled, up from an estimated 7 percent fifteen to twenty years earlier. Teacher-student ratios also improved, from 47:1 to 36:1 in the primary schools and from 26:1 to 25:1 in secondary schools. The increased attendance was all the more significant given the population's high percentage of school-age children. Improvement in educational facilities was funded in 1993 by loans from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the African Development Bank. Despite the spread of education, adult literacy in 1993 has been estimated at no better than 50 percent.

Comoros has no university, but postsecondary education, which in 1993 involved 400 students, is available in the form of teacher training, agricultural education training, health sciences, and business. Those desiring higher education must study abroad; a "brain drain" has resulted because few university graduates are willing to return to the islands. Teacher training and other specialized courses are available at the M'Vouni School for Higher Education, in operation since 1981 at a site near Moroni. Few Comoran teachers study overseas, but the republic often cannot give its teachers all the training they need. Some international aid has been provided, however, to further teacher training in the islands themselves. For example, in 1987 the IDA extended credits worth US$7.9 million to train 3,000 primary and 350 secondary school teachers. In 1986 the government began opening technology training cen-

ters offering a three-year diploma program at the upper secondary level. The Ministry of National Education and Professional Training is responsible for education policy.

As elsewhere in Comoran society, political instability has taken a toll on the education system. Routinely announced reductions in force among the civil service, often made in response to international pressure for fiscal reform, sometimes result in teacher strikes. When civil service cutbacks result in canceled classes or examinations, students have at times taken to the streets in protest. Students have also protested, even violently, against government underfunding or general mismanagement of the schools—the World Bank stated in 1994 that the quality of education resulted in high rates of repetition and dropouts such that many students needed fourteen years to complete the six-year primary cycle.

Public Health

After independence in 1975, the French withdrew their medical teams, leaving the three islands' already rudimentary health care system in a state of severe crisis. French assistance was eventually resumed, and other nations also contributed medical assistance to the young republic. Despite improvements in life expectancy and the infant mortality rate, Comoros in 1994 continued to face public health problems characteristic of developing countries.

Life expectancy at birth was estimated at fifty-six years in 1990, up from fifty-one years in 1980. The crude birthrate was forty-eight per 1,000 and the crude death rate, twelve per 1,000 according to 1989 statistics. All three of these figures were close to the averages for sub-Saharan Africa. The rate of infant mortality per 1,000 live births was eighty-nine in 1991, down from 113 in 1980. The 1990 average rate for sub-Saharan Africa was 107.

Malaria is ubiquitous in the islands, with 80 to 90 percent of the population said to be affected by the disease. Other prevalent maladies include tuberculosis, leprosy, and parasitic diseases. In 1989 about half of all children one year old or younger had been immunized against tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, and measles, a proportion roughly comparable to the rate of immunization among other states in sub-Saharan Africa. Per capita daily caloric intake in 1988 was 2,046, about average for sub-Saharan Africa but only a little better than 90 percent of daily requirements. Children are most

often the victims of malnutrition. Their generally poor diets are deficient in protein in part because local custom discourages the feeding of fish to children. The scarcity of safe drinking water—available to about one in three Comorans—makes intestinal parasites a problem and compounds malnutrition, with children again being the main victims.

The World Bank estimated that in 1993 Comoros had one physician per 6,582 Comorans, a marked improvement over the ratio of one to 13,810 reported in 1983. Comparable data for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole were not available; however, it appeared that Comorans enjoyed a more favorable ratio than many of their neighbors in East Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Despite improvements in life expectancy, infant mortality, and the number of physicians, the overall quality of care remains poor. About 80 percent of the population lives within one hour's walk of a health facility, usually headed by a trained nurse, but paramedical staff are in short supply, and many health facilities are in poor condition. Some international medical aid has been provided, mostly by France and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Although Comoros lacks homegrown narcotics, the islands are used as a transit site for drugs coming mainly from Madagascar. In view of international concern about drug trafficking, in 1993 France began providing technical expertise in this field to Comoros. In addition, the World Bank in a 1994 report pointed out the "high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases and the low use of condoms" as a significant health threat with regard to the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), which already affected the islands. However, in the period prior to 1990 and extending through 1992, the WHO reported that Comoros had a very low incidence of AIDS—a total of three cases with no case reported in 1992, or an overall case rate of 0.1 per 100,000 population.

Media

As recently as the early 1980s Comoros had no national media. State-run Radio Comoros, transmitting from Njazidja, was not strong enough to send clear signals to the republic's other two islands. In 1984 France agreed to provide Radio Comoros with funding for an FM (frequency modulation) transmitter strong enough to broadcast to all three islands, and in 1985 made a commitment to fund a national newspaper after a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO) study revealed that Comoros was the only UN member lacking print and electronic media. A state-owned newspaper, *Al Watwany*, began operations in July 1985, first as a monthly and soon afterward as a weekly. An independent weekly, *L'Archipel*, began publishing in 1988. A news agency, Agence Comores Presse, is now based in Moroni, and France has provided funds for establishing a national television service. In 1989 Comoros had an estimated 61,000 radios and 200 television sets.

In addition to national broadcasts on FM in Comoran Swahili and French, Radio Comoros in 1994 broadcast internationally on the shortwave band in Swahili, Arabic, and French. An independent commercial FM radio station, Radio Tropique FM, began broadcasting in 1991, although it and its director, political activist Ali Bakar Cassim, have both been the object of government ire over the station's readiness to criticize the Djohar regime.

During the independent media's brief career, its representatives occasionally have been rounded up along with other critics of the government during the republic's recurrent bouts of political crisis. However, outlets such as Radio Tropique FM and *L'Archipel*, which is noted for its satirical column, "Winking Eye," continue to provide independent political commentary.

Economy

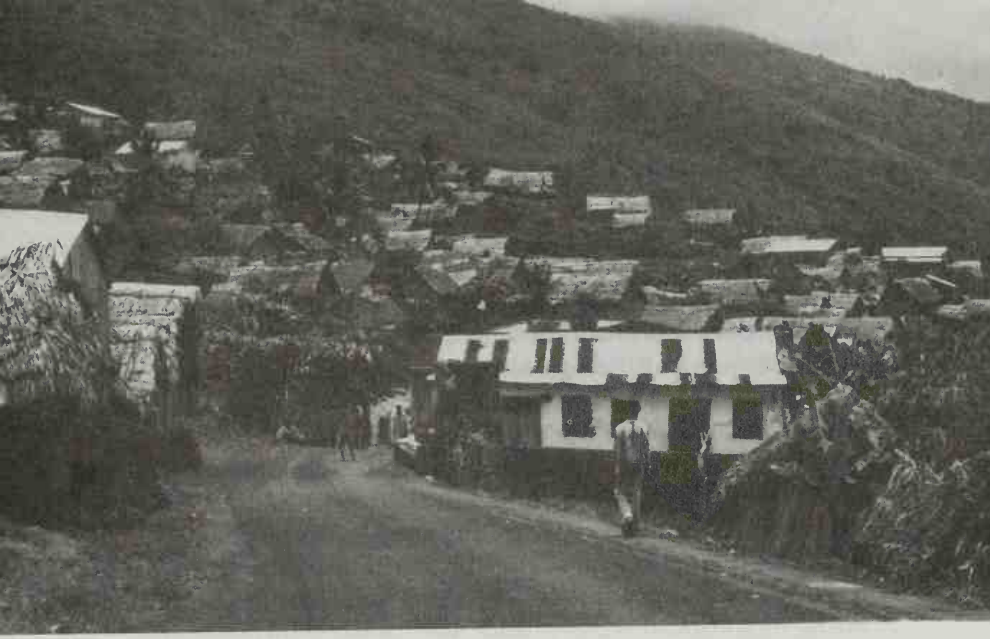
During the colonial period, the French and local leading citizens established plantations to grow cash crops for export. Even after independence, French companies, such as Société Bambao and Établissements Grimaldi—and other concerns, such as Kalfane and Company and, later, President Abdallah's Établissements Abdallah et Fils—dominated the Comoran economy. These firms diverted most of their profits overseas, investing little in the infrastructure of the islands beyond what was needed for profitable management of the plantations, or what could benefit these businesses' associates or related concerns. A serious consequence of this approach has been the languishing of the food-crop agricultural sector and the resultant dependence on overseas food imports, particularly rice. In 1993 Comoros remained hostage to fluctuating prices on the international market for such crops as vanilla, ylang-ylang, and cloves.

Comoros is one of the world's poorest countries; its per capita gross national product (GNP—see Glossary) was estimated

at US$400 in 1994, following the January devaluation of the Comoran franc. Although GNP increased in real terms at an average annual rate of 3.1 percent during the 1980s, rapid population growth effaced these gains and caused an average annual decrease in per capita GNP of 0.6 percent. Gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) grew in real terms by 4.2 percent per year from 1980 to 1985, 1.8 percent from 1985 to 1988, and 1.5 percent in 1990. In 1991, because of its balance of payments difficulties, Comoros became eligible for the IDA's Special Program of Assistance for debt-distressed countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

The economy is based on private ownership, frequently by foreign investors. Nationalization, even during the Soilih years, has been limited. Soilih did expropriate the facilities of a foreign oil company, but only after the government of Madagascar took over the company's plants in that country. The Abdallah government, despite its openness to foreign participation in the economy, nationalized the Société Bambao and another French-capitalized firm, the Comoran Meat Company (Société Comorienne des Viandes—Socovia), which specialized in sales of meat and other foods in the islands. The nationalization was short-lived, however, because Socovia and other government-held enterprises were either liquidated or privatized as part of economic restructuring efforts in 1992.

Following the Abdallah regime's rapprochement with France in 1978, the Comoran economy became increasingly dependent on infusions of French aid, along with assistance from other governments and international organizations. By 1990, the year Comoros concluded negotiations with the IMF for an economic restructuring program, the republic's total external public debt was US$162.4 million, an amount equal to about three-quarters of GNP. The government delayed implementing the structural adjustment plan and was directed by the World Bank and the IMF to do so by September 1992. The plan recommendations entailed discharging about 2,800 of 9,000 civil servants, among other unpopular measures. The IMF granted Comoros a new credit for US$1.9 million in March 1994 under the Structural Adjustment Facility. For the period 1994-96, Comoros sought an economic growth rate of 4 percent, as well as an inflation rate of 4 percent for 1995–96. The growth rate for 1994, however, was estimated only at 0.7 percent and the inflation rate at 15 percent. Meanwhile, in a move designed to encourage private enterprise and reduce unem-



Village on Njazidja
Market on Mwali
Courtesy Mari G. Borstelmann

ployment, in May 1993 the UN Development Programme had given Comoros a credit of US$2 million for programs in these areas. In January 1994, the European Development Fund (EDF) granted 1.3 million European Currency Units (ECUs—see Glossary) to Comoros to develop small businesses. Comoros also received 5.7 million French francs from the French Aid and Cooperation Fund for agriculture and rural development.

The results of foreign aid to Comoros have been mixed at best. The purposes of the aid ranged from helping the government cover its payroll for such huge, seemingly endless projects as expanding the seaport at Moroni and developing a new port at Mutsamudu on Nzwani. Neither project had shown much promise by mid-1994. Meanwhile, the islands have been unable to develop local resources or create the infrastructure needed for economic development. The few successes include the creation of national news media and limited improvements in public health, education, and telecommunications. Developmental assistance from the United States, which totaled US$700,000 in fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1991, was administered by CARE, the nongovernmental organization, and focused primarily on reforestation, soil conservation, and sustainable development in agriculture.

The overall effect of the republic's dependence on aid has been perennial trade deficits accompanied by chronic budget deficits. In 1992 total exports had a value of US$21 million, and total imports were valued at US$50 million. In 1991 receipts totaled about US$34.7 million (CF9.7 trillion; CF—Comoran franc; for value of the Comoran franc—see Glossary) whereas expenditures totaled about US$93.8 million (CF26.2 trillion). The shortfall, which equaled about 170 percent of receipts, was financed by international grants and loans, by drawing upon existing lines of credit, and by debt rescheduling.

In 1991 France received 55 percent of Comoran exports, followed by the United States (19 percent) and Germany (16 percent). The main export products were vanilla, ylang-ylang, and cloves. The republic's primary suppliers were France (56 percent of imports), the Belgium-Luxembourg economic union (11 percent), and Japan (5 percent). Imports consisted of basic foodstuffs (rice and meat), petroleum, and construction materials.

Comoros has officially participated in the African Franc Zone (Communauté Financière Africaine—CFA; see Glossary)

since 1979. The CFA franc was devalued by 50 percent on January 12, 1994, causing the exchange rate to become 100 CFA francs for one French franc. Subsequently, the Comoran franc was devalued so that instead of being directly aligned with the CFA franc, seventy-five Comoran francs equaled one French franc.

The banking system consists of the Central Bank of Comoros (Banque Centrale des Comores) established in 1981; the Bank for Industry and Commerce (Banque pour l'Industrie et le Commerce—BIC), a commercial bank established in 1990 that had six branches in 1993 and is a subsidiary of the National Bank of Paris-International (Banque Nationale de Paris-Internationale); BIC Afribank, a BIC subsidiary; and the Development Bank of Comoros (Banque de Développement des Comores), established in 1982, which provides support for small and midsize development projects. Most of the shares in the Development Bank of Comoros are held by the Comoran government and the central bank; the rest are held by the European Investment Bank and the Central Bank for Economic Cooperation (Caisse Centrale de Coopération Économique—CCCE), a development agency of the French government. All of these banks have headquarters in Moroni.

A national labor organization, the Union of Comoran Workers (Union des Travailleurs des Comores), also has headquarters in Moroni. Strikes and worker demonstrations often occur in response to political crises, economic restructuring mandated by international financial organizations, and the failure of the government—occasionally for months at a time—to pay civil servants.

Agriculture, Livestock, and Fishing

Agriculture supported about 80 percent of the population and supplied about 95 percent of exports in the early 1990s. Two agricultural zones are generally defined: the coastal area, which ranges in elevation from sea level to 400 meters and which supports cash crops such as vanilla, ylang-ylang, and cloves; and the highlands, which support cultivation of crops for domestic consumption, such as cassava, bananas, rain-fed rice, and sweet potatoes. As the population increased, food grown for domestic use met fewer and fewer of Comorans' needs. Data collected by the World Bank showed that food production per capita fell about 12 percent from 1980 to 1987. The republic imports almost all its meat and vegetables; rice

imports alone often account for up to 30 percent of the value of all imports.

Comoros is the world's principal producer of ylang-ylang essence, an essence derived from the flowers of a tree originally brought from Indonesia that is used in manufacturing perfumes and soaps. Ylang-ylang essence is a major component of Chanel No. 5, the popular scent for women. The republic is the world's second largest producer of vanilla, after Madagascar. Cloves are also an important cash crop. A total of 237 tons of vanilla was exported in 1991, at a price of about CF19 per kilogram. A total of 2,750 tons of cloves was exported in 1991, at a price of CF397 per kilogram. That year forty-three tons of ylang-ylang essence were exported at a price of about CF23,000 per kilogram. The production of all three commodities fluctuates wildly, mainly in response to changes in global demand and natural disasters such as cyclones. Profits—and, therefore, government receipts—likewise skyrocket and plummet, wreaking havoc with government efforts to predict revenues and plan expenditures. Stabex (Stabilization of Export Earnings—see Glossary), a system of the EC, provides aid to Comoros and other developing countries to mitigate the effects of fluctuations in the prices of export commodities.

Long-term prospects for the growth and stabilization of the markets for vanilla and ylang-ylang did not appear strong in the early 1990s. Vanilla faced increased competition from synthetic flavorings, and the preferences of perfume users were moving away from the sweet fragrance provided by ylang-ylang essence. Copra, the dried coconut meat that yields coconut oil, once an important Comoran export, had ceased to be a significant factor in the economy by the late 1980s, when the world's tastes shifted from high-fat coconut oil toward "leaner" substances such as palm oil. Although clove production and revenues also experienced swings, in the early 1990s cloves did not appear to face the same sorts of challenges confronting vanilla and ylang-ylang. Most Comoran vanilla is grown on Njazidja; Nzwani is the source of most ylang-ylang.

Numerous international programs have attempted to reduce the country's dependence on food imports, particularly of rice, a major drain on export earnings. Organizations initiating these rural development programs have included the EDF, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Program, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization,

and the governments of France and the United States. Despite these international efforts, which numbered as many as seventeen in 1984, food production per capita actually declined in Comoros during the 1980s. The major clove and vanilla growers, whose plantations occupy the islands' fertile coastal lands, generally resisted these restructuring efforts, as did rice-importing firms, including the country's largest, Établissements Abdallah et Fils.

Crowded onto the mountain slopes by the cash-crop plantations, food-crop farmers have caused deforestation and the erosion of the highlands' thin, fragile soil. In response, aid providers have dedicated an increasing amount of agricultural assistance to reforestation, soil restoration, and environmentally sensitive means of cultivation. For example, all United States agricultural aid in 1991 (US$700,000) was directed to such projects, as was a US$4 million loan from the IFAD to help initiate a small producers' support program on Nzwani.

The livestock sector is small—some 47,000 cattle, 120,000 goats, 13,000 sheep, and 4,000 asses in 1990. Comoros continues to import most domestically consumed meat.

Since the latter part of the 1980s, Comoros has made headway in developing fisheries as a source of export earnings. In 1988 the government concluded a three-year agreement with the EC by which forty French and Spanish vessels would be permitted to fish in Comoran waters, primarily for tuna. In return, Comoros would receive ECU300,000, and ECU50,000 would be invested in fisheries research. In addition, fishing vessel operators would pay ECU20 per ton of tuna netted. Although the deep waters outside the islands' reefs do not abound in fish, it has been estimated that up to 30,000 tons of fish could be taken per year from Comoran waters (which extend 320 kilometers offshore). The total catch in 1990 was 5,500 tons. Japan has also provided aid to the fishing industry. Fisheries development is overseen by a state agency, the Development Company for Small-Scale Fisheries of Comoros (Société de Développement de la Pêche Artisanale des Comores).

Industry and Infrastructure

Industrial activities are responsible for only a tiny portion of Comoran economic activity—about 5 percent of GDP in 1994. Principal industries are those that involve processing cash crops for export: preparing vanilla and distilling ylang-ylang into perfume essence. These activities were once controlled

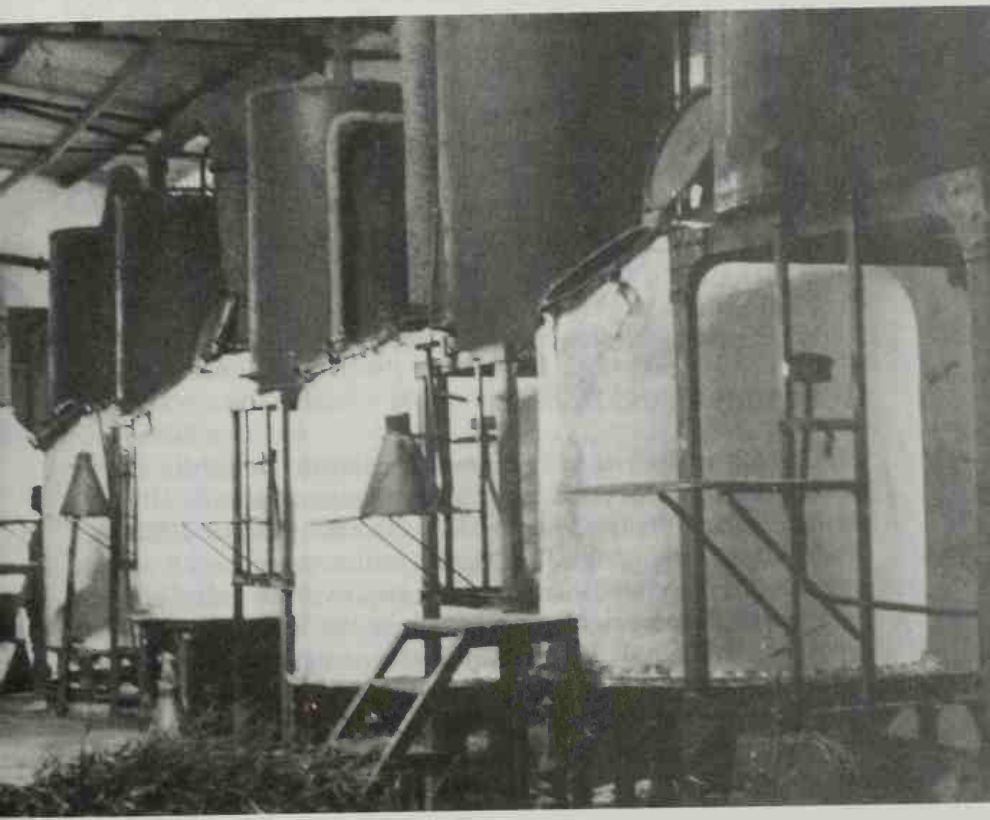
almost entirely by French companies, but as they closed unprofitable plantations, individual farmers set up many small, inefficient distilleries. Comorans also produce handicrafts for export. Other industries are small and geared to internal markets: sawmills, printing, carpentry, and the production of shoes, plastics, yogurt, handicrafts (such as the jewelry exchanged as part of the *grand mariage*), and small fishing boats. Several factors provide major obstacles to the growth of industry: the islands' geographically isolated position, their distance from each other, a scarcity of raw materials and skilled labor, and the high cost of electricity (energy is produced by hydropower, imported petroleum, and wood products) and transportation. Value added in industry slowly declined throughout the 1980s.

Perhaps the primary outcome of South African penetration of the Comoran economy during the Abdallah regime was the development of tourism. Although South African investors built or renovated several hotels during the 1980s (with assistance from the South African and Comoran governments), only one resort, the 182-room Galawa Beach on Njazidja, was operating by late 1992. About 100 other hotel rooms are available on the islands. Political instability, a declining South African interest in the islands as the apartheid regime was disassembled and other tropical tourism venues became more welcoming, and the need to import most construction materials and consumable supplies inhibited the growth of tourism, despite the islands' physical beauty. Nonetheless, in large part thanks to Galawa Beach, which had been closed during 1990, tourism increased from 7,627 visitors in 1990 to about 19,000 in 1992. Most of these tourists were Europeans, primarily French.

Transportation and Telecommunications

The relative isolation of the Comoro Islands had made air traffic a major means of transportation. One of President Abdallah's accomplishments was to make Comoros more accessible by air. During his administration, he negotiated agreements to initiate or enhance commercial air links with Tanzania and Madagascar. The Djohar regime reached an agreement in 1990 to link Moroni and Brussels by air. By the early 1990s, commercial flights connected Comoros with France, Mauritius, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, and Madagascar. The national airline is Air Comores. Daily flights link

Nzwani factory that distils oil from lemongrass
Courtesy Brian Kensley



the three main islands, and air service is also available to Mahoré; each island has airstrips. In 1986 the republic received a grant from the French government's CCCE to renovate and expand Hahaya airport, near Moroni. Because of the absence of regularly scheduled sea transport between the islands, nearly all interisland passenger traffic is by air.

More than 99 percent of freight is transported by sea. Both Moroni on Njazidja and Mutsamudu on Nzwani have artificial harbors. There is also a harbor at Fomboni, on Mwali. Despite extensive internationally financed programs to upgrade the harbors at Moroni and Mutsamudu, by the early 1990s only Mutsamudu was operational as a deepwater facility. Its harbor can accommodate vessels of up to eleven meters' draught. At Moroni, ocean-going vessels typically lie offshore and are loaded or unloaded by smaller craft, a costly and sometimes dangerous procedure. Most freight continues to be sent to Kenya, Reunion, or Madagascar for transshipment to Comoros. Use of Comoran ports is further restricted by the threat of cyclones from December through March. The privately operated Comoran Navigation Company (Société Comorienne de Navigation) is based in Moroni and provides services to Madagascar.)

Roads serve the coastal areas, rather than the interior, and the mountainous terrain makes surface travel difficult. In 1987 the total length of roads in Comoros was about 750 kilometers, including both paved and dirt roads.

In large part thanks to international aid programs, Moroni has international telecommunications service. Telephone service, however, is largely limited to the islands' few towns. Some 3,000 telephones were in use in 1991.

Government and Politics

The Constitution of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros was approved by referendum on June 7, 1992. It replaced the constitution of 1978, as amended in 1982 and 1985. Among the general principles enumerated in the preamble are the recognition of Islam as the state religion and respect for human rights as set forth in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All citizens are declared equal before the law.

The president is elected by direct universal suffrage to a five-year term and is limited to two terms. All persons over the age of eighteen who possess full civil and political rights may vote.

The president may be elected to no more than two terms. The president is both head of state and head of government. The president nominates ministers to form the Council of Government, which had twelve members in the latter half of 1994. The ministries are routinely reshuffled, merged, eliminated, and resurrected. In 1994 the Council of Government consisted of : the prime minister, who also served as minister of civil service, and the ministers of Economy, Plan, Industry, and Handicrafts; Equipment, Energy, Urbanization, and Housing; Finance and Budget; Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; Information, Culture, Youth, Sports, and Posts and Telecommunication; Islamic Affairs and Justice; National Education and Technical and Professional Teaching; Public Health; Rural Development, Fisheries, and the Environment; Social Affairs, Work, and Employment; and Transportation and Tourism. The president also nominates governors for each of the three islands for five-year terms. If the presidency becomes vacant, the president of the Supreme Court serves as interim president until an election can be held.

The constitution provides for a bicameral legislature. The forty-two members of the "lower" house, the Federal Assembly, represent electoral wards for four-year terms. The Federal Assembly meets for two forty-five-day sessions per year, in April and October. The upper house, the Senate, has fifteen members, five from each island, who are chosen by an Electoral College. The post of prime minister is held by a member of the party holding a majority of seats in the Federal Assembly. The number of political parties may be regulated by federal law. In 1994 more than twenty political parties were active. Areas subject to federal legislation include defense, communications, law, international trade, federal taxation, economic planning, and social services.

As a federal republic, Comoros assigns autonomy to the three constituent islands in matters that, in accordance with the constitution, do not come within the purview of the national government. Each island has a council whose members are elected to represent electoral wards for four-year terms. Normally, each council meets twice yearly, in March and December, for a fifteen-day session (see Political Dynamics, this ch.).

The judiciary is considered independent of the executive and legislature. The Supreme Court examines constitutional issues and supervises presidential elections. The high court

also arbitrates when the government is accused of malpractice. The Supreme Court normally consists of at least seven members: two chosen by the president, two elected by the Federal Assembly, and three chosen by the respective island councils. Former presidents also may serve on the high court.

Political Dynamics

In the immediate aftermath of the Abdallah assassination and subsequent events of late 1989, a limited amount of political healing occurred in Comoros. Denard and his fellow mercenaries were expelled, although the fate of their vast financial holdings in the islands remained unclear. With the South African government temporarily out of the picture, French officials now oversaw the police and the army, and the remnants of the GP were under the watchful eye of French paratroopers. Among those released in a general amnesty for political prisoners was Mustapha Said Cheikh, leader of the opposition FD who had been imprisoned for four years for alleged involvement in the unsuccessful March 1985 coup. He was quickly proposed as a possible presidential candidate. Also suggested was Mohamed Taki, one-time National Assembly president whose power had been diminished by Abdallah's constitutional maneuvers; he had subsequently gone into exile in France, where his entourage reportedly included two mercenary bodyguards. Also announcing for the presidency was Said Ali Kemal, who had been living in quiet exile in Paris since being exposed as the sponsor of Australian mercenaries who had plotted to overthrow the Abdallah government in 1983. In late December 1989, members of the formerly banned opposition, along with President Djohar, decided to form a provisional "national unity" government and to hold a multiparty presidential election in 1990.

In an awkward but somehow effective campaign to keep himself in power, Djohar spent much of the early 1990s playing a political shell game with the opposition. He moved election dates backward and forward and sanctioned irregularities, giving his opponents little choice but to condemn the balloting as invalid. Djohar began this strategy within weeks of his installation as interim president, rescheduling the presidential election set for January 14, 1990, to February 18. Djohar's decision was met with demonstrations and violence that marked an abrupt end to the post-Abdallah period of national unity, hardly three weeks after Bob Denard had been expelled from

the country. The February 18 balloting broke down shortly after the polls opened. The government was accused of widespread fraud, including issuing multiple voting cards to some voters and opening the polls to voters who looked well below the minimum age of eighteen.

Elections were rescheduled for March 4, 1990, with a runoff on March 11; Djohar was the official victor, claiming 55 percent of the vote over runner-up Mohamed Taki's 45 percent. Djohar had run under the banner of the Union Comorienne pour le Progrès (Udzima—Comoran Union for Progress), basically a recycled version of Ahmed Abdallah's old UCP, whereas Taki had represented the National Union for Comoran Democracy (Union Nationale pour la Démocratie Comorienne—UNDC). As would be the case in other Comoran elections in the 1990s, the sole major issue appeared to be the character and ability of the incumbent president rather than any matter of public policy or ideology. The Supreme Court certified the results of the election, despite strong evidence that the Ministry of Interior had altered the vote count, especially in the first round, to favor Djohar at Taki's expense.

In March 1992, with two of the government's Udzima ministers having broken away to form a new party and conflict among the remaining Udzima ministers growing, Djohar headed off the complete collapse of his government by convening a multiparty constitutional convention. He scheduled a referendum on the new document in May, with general elections in June and balloting for local offices in July. After one postponement, the referendum was held on June 7. The Constitution of 1992 passed with about 74 percent of the vote, despite intensive campaigning against it by the FD and Udzima, which by this point opposed President Djohar. Among the new document's elements were articles calling for a bicameral legislature and a limit on presidential tenure to two five-year terms.

The legislative elections, postponed several times, finally were held on November 22 and 29, 1992. They were preceded in late September by an attempted coup by junior army officers, allegedly with the support of opposition politicians. Possible motives for the coup were an unpopular restructuring program mandated by the World Bank, which entailed sharp reductions in the number of civil servants, and President Djohar's ambiguous threat on September 10 that his main opponents would "not be around for the elections." Djohar used the coup attempt as an opportunity to jail six military men and six

opposition leaders "under conditions of extreme illegality," according to the Comoran Association for Human Rights (Association Comorienne des Droits Humains—ACDH).

Although a trio of French public officials sent to observe the balloting judged the election generally democratic, President Djohar's most prominent and determined opponents spent the voting days either in hiding or in jail. Two of the most important of the republic's twenty-four political parties, Udzima and the UNDC, boycotted the election. Given the president's own lack of party support, he spent most of 1993 cobbling together one government after another; at one point, in late spring 1993, he formed two governments in the space of three weeks.

The events of a single day in July 1993 perhaps summed up the near-term prospects of politics in Comoros. On July 23, heeding demands that he call legislative elections (he had dissolved parliament on June 18 because of its inability to agree on a candidate for prime minister and because of the lack of a government majority) or else face the prospect of "other forms of action" by the opposition, Djohar scheduled voting for late October. That same day, his government arrested two opposition leaders for public criticism of the president.

The scheduled elections were again postponed—for the fourth time—until December 1993. On November 17, 1993, Djohar created a new National Electoral Commission, said to be appropriately representative of the various political parties. Meanwhile Djohar had established a new progovernment party, the Rally for Democracy and Renewal (Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Renouveau—RDR). In the first round of elections on December 12, which featured twenty-four parties with 214 candidates for forty-two seats, various voting irregularities occurred, including the failure to issue voting cards to some 30 percent of eligible voters. The government announced that Djohar's party had won twenty-one seats with three seats remaining to be contested. Most opposition parties stated that they would not sit in the assembly and also refused to participate in the postponed second-stage elections, which were supervised by the Ministry of Interior and the gendarmerie after the National Electoral Commission disintegrated. As a result, the RDR gained a total of twenty-two seats, and Djohar appointed RDR secretary general Mohamed Abdou Madi as prime minister.

Denouncing the proceedings, on January 17, 1994, thirteen opposition parties formed a combined Forum for National

Recovery (Forum pour le Redressement National—FRN). The Udzima Party began broadcasting articles about Comoros appearing in the *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, including criticisms of the RDR. In consequence, its radio station, Voix des Îles (Voice of the Islands), was confiscated by the government in mid–February 1994—in September 1993, the radio station belonging to Abbas Djoussouf, who later became leader of the RDR, had been closed. Tensions increased, and in March 1994 an assassination attempt against Djohar occurred. At the end of May, civil service employees went on strike, including teachers, and violence erupted in mid-June when the FRN prepared to meet.

Foreign Affairs

Comoros' most significant international relationship is that with France. The three years of estrangement following the unilateral declaration of independence and the nationalistic Soilih regime were followed during the conservative Abdallah and Djohar regimes by a period of growing trade, aid, cultural, and defense links between the former colony and France, punctuated by frequent visits to Paris by the head of state and occasional visits by the French president to Moroni. The leading military power in the region, France has detachments on Mahoré and Reunion, and its Indian Ocean fleet sails the waters around the islands. France and Comoros signed a mutual security treaty in 1978; following the mercenary coup against Abdallah in 1989, French troops restored order and took responsibility for reorganizing and training the Comoran army. With Mahoré continuing to gravitate politically and economically toward France, and Comoros increasingly dependent on the French for help with its own considerable social, political, and economic problems, the issue of Mahoré diminished somewhat in urgency.

The close relationship Comoros developed with South Africa in the 1980s was much less significant to both countries in the 1990s. With the reform of its apartheid government, South Africa no longer needed Comoros as evidence of its ostensible ability to enjoy good relations with a black African state; the end of the Cold War had also diminished Comoros' strategic value to Pretoria. Although South Africa continued to provide developmental aid, it closed its consulate in Moroni in 1992. After the 1989 coup and subsequent expulsion of South African-financed mercenaries, Comoros likewise turned away

from South Africa and toward France for assistance with its security needs.

The government has fostered close relationships with the more conservative (and oil-rich) Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It frequently received aid from those countries and the regional financial institutions they influenced, such as the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. In October 1993, Comoros joined the League of Arab States, after having been rejected when it applied for membership initially in 1977.

Regional relations generally are good. In 1985 Madagascar, Mauritius, and Seychelles agreed to admit Comoros as the fourth member of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), an organization established in 1982 to encourage regional cooperation. In 1993 Mauritius and Seychelles had two of the five embassies in Moroni, and Mauritius and Madagascar were connected to the republic by regularly scheduled commercial flights.

Comoros also hosts an embassy of China, which established relations during the Soilih regime. The Chinese had long been a source of aid and apparently wished to maintain contact with Comoros to counterbalance Indian and Soviet (later Russian) influence in the Indian Ocean. Comoran relations with Japan are also significant because Japan is the second largest provider of aid, consisting of funding for fisheries, food, and highway development. The United States established diplomatic relations in 1977 but in September 1993 closed it embassy in Moroni. The two countries enjoy friendly relations.

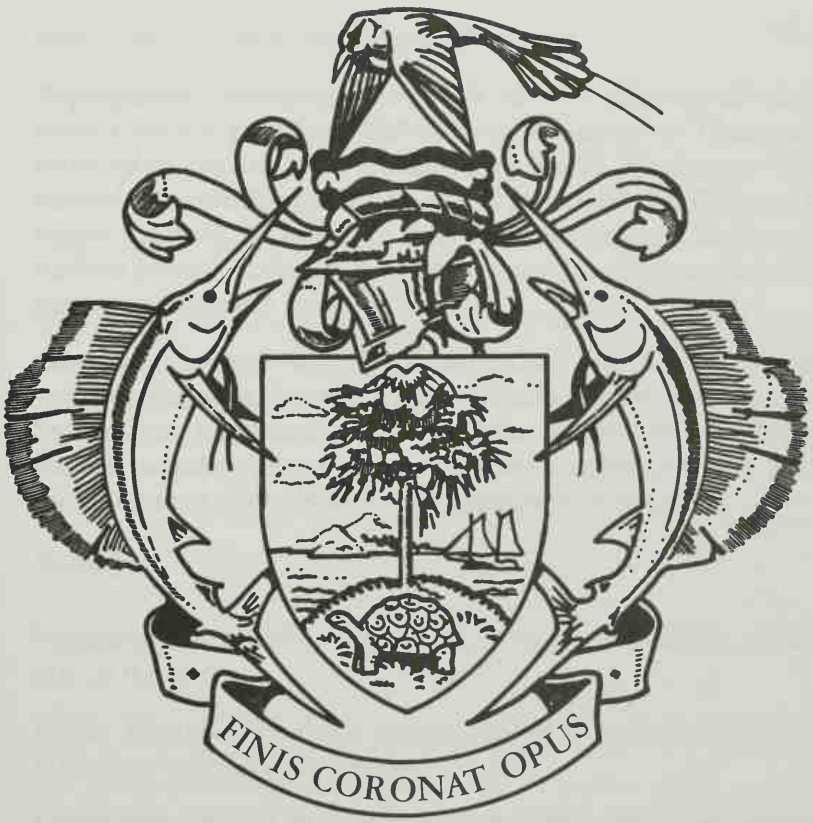
In November 1975, Comoros became the 143d member of the UN. In the 1990s, the republic continued to represent Mahoré in the UN. Comoros is also a member of the OAU, the EDF, the World Bank, the IMF, the IOC, and the African Development Bank.

Comoros has thus cultivated relations with various nations, both East and West, seeking to increase trade and obtain financial assistance. In 1994, however, it was increasingly facing the need to control its expenditures and reorganize its economy so that it would be viewed as a sounder recipient of investment. Comoros also confronted domestically the problem of the degree of democracy the government was prepared to grant to its citizens, a consideration that related to its standing in the world community.

* * *

The reader seeking recent works on the history, politics, and society of Comoros also needs to consult a number of publications that cover the republic as one of many African or Indian Ocean countries. These include *Africa Analysis*, *Africa Contemporary Record*, *Africa Events*, *Africa Research Bulletin*, and *Africa South of the Sahara*. Other periodically issued sources include the annual country-by-country *Amnesty International Report* and the newsletters *Africa Confidential* and *Indian Ocean Newsletter*. Whereas the *Times* of London, *New York Times*, and *Washington Post* report Comoros' more serious upheavals, more regular coverage is provided by *Le Monde*. Useful social and economic data can be obtained from World Bank publications. One such publication in particular, *Social Indicators of Development*, an annual, provides country-by-country tables of data on indicators of poverty and resources and expenditures. Books such as Thierry Flobert's 1976 work, *Les Comores: Évolution juridique et socio-politique*, the World Bank 1979 publication *The Comoros: Problems and Prospects of a Small, Island Economy*, and Malyn Newitt's *The Comoro Islands: Struggle Against Dependency in the Indian Ocean* provide useful background despite their growing datedness. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 4. Seychelles



National emblem of Seychelles

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Seychelles.

Short Name: Seychelles.

Term for Citizens: Seychellois.

Capital: Victoria.

Date of Independence: June 29, 1976 (from Britain).

Geography

Size: Approximately 444 square kilometers.

Topography: Archipelago consists of 115 islands, of which some forty are granitic, within ninety kilometers of Mahé, and remainder coralline, stretching over 1,200 kilometers from northeast to southwest. Major islands are Mahé, Praslin, and La Digue. Granitic islands have hills up to 940 meters high, some narrow coastal plains, and coral reefs on east coasts. Corailine islands are flat with no fresh water.

Climate: Tropical with high humidity but breezy. Cooler weather brought by southeast monsoon from late May to September; northwest monsoon from March to May brings warmer weather. Mean average annual rainfall in Mahé 2,880 millimeters at sea level and 3,550 millimeters on slopes.

Society

Population: July 1994 estimate 72,113 with population growth rate of 0.8 percent.

Ethnic Groups: Relatively homogeneous population of mixed European and African descent.

Languages: Official languages: Creole (first), English (second),

French (third).

Religion: Roman Catholics (90 percent), Anglicans (7 percent), evangelical Protestants (1 percent), and other (2 percent).

Education: Free, required attendance grades one through nine. Initial instruction in Creole, English added in grade three, French in grade six. Participation in one-year National Youth Service program at age fifteen generally needed to enter Seychelles Polytechnic or to begin work. No higher education on island. Overall claimed literacy in 1991: 85 percent.

Health: Free government health services for all citizens. In 1994 life expectancy at birth estimated at: overall 69.7 years, 73.4 for females, 66.1 years for males. Infant mortality in 1994 estimated at 11.7 per 1,000 live births.

Economy

Gross Domestic Product: 1992 estimate US$407 million, with growth rate of 4 percent, and inflation rate of 3.3 percent (1993 inflation rate 4 percent). 1992 per capita GDP of US$5,900. In 1980s socialist France Albert René government created many parastatals; in early 1990s moving toward more liberal economy and privatization.

Labor Force: In 1991 government employed 38 percent of labor, parastatals employed 26 percent, and private sector 36 percent. Independent trade unions allowed since November 1993.

Tourism: Major source of economic activity, including tourism-related services; provides 50 percent of GDP, but imported food and materials for tourism cost 70 percent of tourism income. In 1993 more than 116,000 tourists, mainly from Europe, South Africa.

Agriculture: Only 400 hectares cultivable on islands. Some vegetables and fruit grown, but most food, including rice, imported. Market for traditional crops, copra and cinnamon, has decreased; tea grown for local consumption. Fishing (tuna and shrimp particularly) encouraged; population eats eighty-

five kilograms seafood per capita annually.

Industry: Very limited because of small market, lack of raw materials; mostly food processing, handicrafts for tourists.

Exports: 1992 estimate US$47 million. Major products canned and frozen fish, copra, cinnamon bark. Major markets Britain, France, Reunion.

Imports: 1992 estimate US$192 million. Major items include manufactured goods, food, petroleum products, transportation equipment and machinery. Major sources: Bahrain, South Africa, Britain, Singapore, and France.

Balance of Payments: Visible trade always in deficit, but tourism helps compensate for excess of imports.

Currency and Exchange Rate: 1 Seychelles rupee (SRe) = 100 cents. August 1995 exchange rate US$1.00 = SRe4.25.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Highways: 302 kilometers in 1994, of which 202 hard surfaced.

Ports: Mahé.

Airports: Eight of fourteen have hard-surfaced runways.

Telecommunications: Good, small system using mainly satellite communications to outside world and direct radio communications with adjacent islands and African coastal countries; some 13,000 telephones in 1994; two amplitude modulation (AM) stations, no frequency modulation (FM) station; two television stations; one Indian Ocean International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) earth station. In 1992 Seychellois had some 38,000 radios and 10,900 television sets.

Government and Politics

Government: Between 1979 and 1993, governed under single-party socialist system. New constitution was approved in

referendum June 1992; multiparty elections in July 1993 in which President René and Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) victorious. President selects cabinet. People's Assembly includes twenty-two elected representatives from constituencies and eleven other members. SPPF holds twenty-seven seats, New Democratic Party of James Mancham five seats, and United Opposition Party (a coalition) one seat. Legal system consists of magistrates' courts, Supreme (or trial) Court, and Court of Appeal.

Politics: Various political parties of which government party, SPPF, holds clear majority.

Foreign Relations: Member of Commonwealth of Nations; has pragmatic foreign policy of "positive nonalignment." Member of Organization of African Unity, Indian Ocean Commission, and Nonaligned Movement.

National Security

Defense Forces: All services under army; total forces of 800 persons in 1994, including 300 in Presidential Guard. Army has one infantry battalion and two artillery elements. Paramilitary forces include national guard of 1,000 persons, coast guard estimated at 300 members including 100-member air wing and eighty marines. Defense budget in 1993 estimated at US$15.9 million.

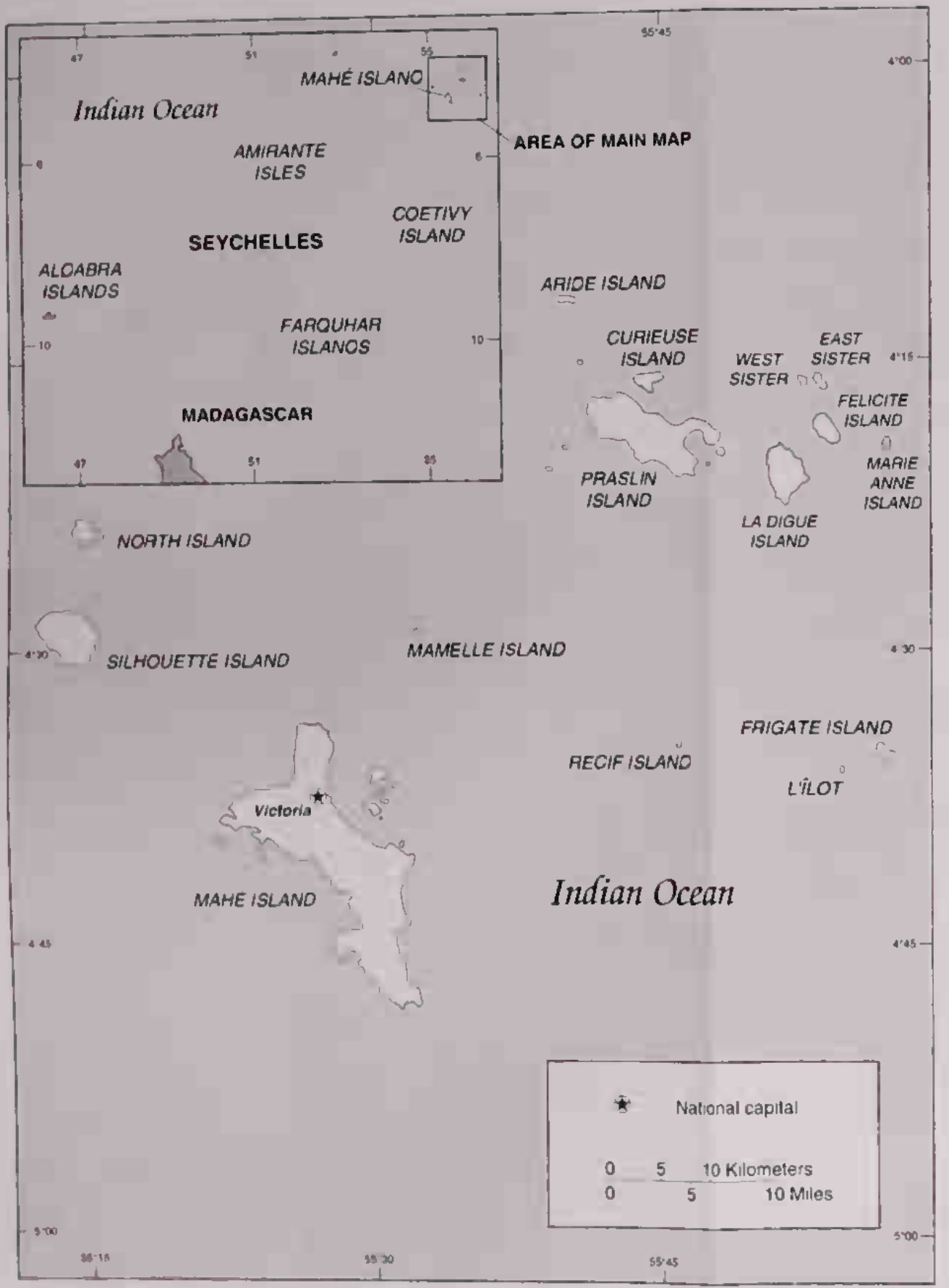


Figure 7. Seychelles: Main Islands and Island Groups, 1994

THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES, one of the world's smallest nations, comprises 115 islands, including a central granitic group and more than seventy widely scattered coral islands. Most of the population is a relatively homogeneous mixture of European and African descent and lives on the main granitic island of Mahé. Before the opening of commercial airline links in 1971, Seychelles had a plantation economy heavily dependent on exports of copra and cinnamon. Tourism has since become the most important sector of economic life.

Claiming jurisdiction over more than 1 million square kilometers of productive fishing grounds, Seychelles has profited from the fees and commercial activity produced by foreign fishing fleets, from the export of fresh and frozen fish of its domestic fishing fleet, and from a tuna cannery operated jointly with French interests. Although Seychelles is vulnerable to fluctuations in the world economy, per capita income is high by developing country standards. Its citizens benefit from a modern social welfare system and free health care and schools.

The nation was a French possession until 1814. In that year, the British took control, administering it first as a dependency of Mauritius and after 1903 as a crown colony (see Glossary). Seychelles was granted independence on June 29, 1976. In June 1977, a coup brought to power a leftist government with France Albert René as president and his party, the socialist-oriented Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) as ruling group. From 1977 through 1991, the René government dominated political life and controlled all phases of the economy. Dissent was forbidden, and opposition figures were forced to flee the country. In 1992 a multiparty system was restored, and in July 1993, after a new constitution was approved by referendum, the nation held free elections. René's Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF—the new name of the SPUP following the 1979 constitution) won easily, defeating the Democratic Party (DP) of former president James Mancham and a coalition of smaller opposition parties.

Historical Setting

Although known and visited by traders from the Persian Gulf area and East Africa in earlier times, the Seychelles Archi-

pelago first appeared on European maps at the beginning of the sixteenth century after Portuguese explorers sighted the islands during voyages to India. Recorded landings did not occur until 1609, however, when members of the British East India Company spent several days on Mahé and other nearby islands. A French expedition from Mauritius reached the islands in 1742, and during a second expedition in 1756 the French made a formal claim to them. The name "Seychelles" honors the French minister of finance under King Louis XV. Settlement began in 1778 under a French military administration but barely survived its first decade. Although the settlers were supposed to plant crops only to provision the garrison and passing French ships, they also found it lucrative to exploit the islands' natural resources. Between 1784 and 1789, an estimated 13,000 giant tortoises were shipped from Mahé. The settlers also quickly devastated the hardwood forests—selling them to passing ships for repairs or to shipyards on Mauritius. In spite of reforms to control the rapid elimination of trees, exploitation of the forest continued for shipbuilding and house building and later for firing cinnamon kilns, ultimately destroying much of the original ecology.

Possession of the islands alternated between France and Britain several times during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. France ceded Seychelles—which at that time included the granitic group and three coral islands—to Britain in 1814 in the Treaty of Paris after rejecting a British offer to take French holdings in India in place of Seychelles. Because Britain's interest in the islands had centered mainly on halting their use as a base for French privateering, its main concern was to keep the islands from becoming burdens. Britain administered Seychelles as a dependency of Mauritius, from which they received little attention and few services.

The first European settlers were French who had been living on Mauritius, Reunion, or in French settlements in India. Many lived in conditions of poverty quite similar to those of their African slaves, who from early on greatly outnumbered the remainder of the population. After the abolition of slavery in the islands in 1834, many settlers left, taking their slaves with them. Later, large numbers of Africans liberated by the British navy from slaving ships on the East African coast were released on Seychelles. Small numbers of Chinese, Malaysians, and Indians moved to the islands, usually becoming small traders and shopkeepers. Intermarriage among all groups except the Indi-

ans was common, however, and left so few families of pure descent that by 1911 the practice of categorizing residents according to race was abandoned.

Before 1838 most Seychellois worked on white-owned estates as slaves, producing cotton, coconut oil, spices, coffee, and sugarcane, as well as sufficient food crops to support the population. After the abolition of slavery, they became agricultural wage laborers, sharecroppers, fishers, or artisans, settling as squatters where they liked. Labor-intensive field crops rapidly gave way to crops that required relatively little labor, including copra, cinnamon, and vanilla. Only those industries related to processing the cash crops or exploiting natural resources developed. As a result, the increasing population quickly came to depend on imports for most basic necessities, including food and manufactured goods.

Crown Colony Status, 1903

Political development proceeded very slowly. From 1814 until 1903, when the islands became a crown colony, they were granted increasing administrative autonomy from Mauritius. In 1888 separate nominated administrative and executive councils were established for Mauritius and Seychelles. Thus, for the first time, some landed white Seychellois were allowed to serve in official advisory positions. In 1897 the administrator of Seychelles was given the powers of a colonial governor, although it was not until 1903 that the islands were separated from Mauritius. When Seychelles became a separate colony, the other islands of the archipelago, except for Coetivy and the Farquhar Islands, were added to the original group acquired by Britain in 1814. Coetivy was transferred from Mauritius in 1908 and the Farquhars in 1922 after World War I.

Widespread involvement of Seychellois in their own political affairs began in 1948 after World War II, when Britain granted suffrage to approximately 2,000 adult male property owners, who then elected four members to the Legislative Council that advised the governor. The winning candidates were drawn from a group known as the Seychelles Taxpayers' and Producers' Association (STPA), which represented the landed strata of society—known colloquially as the *grands blancs* (great whites). The STPA defended its members' interest in matters of crop marketing and other issues and was the principal political force in the nation until the early 1960s, when rep-

resentatives of the small new urban professional and middle class began to win seats.

Two parties emerged to represent this new constituency: the DP, led by James Mancham, and the SPUP, led by France Albert René. Both men were London-educated lawyers who had returned to Seychelles determined to improve local conditions and to develop popularly based local politics.

Although community rivalries and the differing styles of the two leaders were important in attracting followers, the two parties also differed in substantive ways. The SPUP called itself socialist, favored worker-oriented policies, and pressed for complete independence from Britain and a nonaligned foreign policy. The pressure for independence was intensified after Britain in 1965 removed Île Desroches, the Aldabra Islands, and the Farquhar Islands from Seychelles and made them part of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The DP took a more laissez-faire capitalist approach and wanted to continue the association with Britain and to allow British and United States bases on the islands.

Steps Toward Independence, 1967–76

Continuous and mounting demands for an increased share in running the colony's affairs prompted Britain to enact a series of constitutions for Seychelles, each of which granted important new concessions. In 1967 Britain extended universal suffrage to the colony and established a governing council to run it, the majority of whose members for the first time were elected. That year almost 18,000 Seychellois voted, and the DP emerged in control of the council. In 1970 Britain set up a ministerial form of government and gave Seychellois the responsibility to administer all but external affairs, internal security, the civil service, and the government's broadcasting service and newspaper. The DP won ten seats, and the SPUP won five in the Legislative Assembly. Mancham became the islands' chief minister and René, the leader of the opposition.

The opening of an international airport on the east coast of Mahé in 1971 improved contact with the outside world. Before this most journeys to and from Seychelles had involved long voyages on bimonthly steamers running between East Africa and India and often required inconvenient transits in Mombasa and Bombay. Air service had been available only on a restricted basis at an airstrip used by the United States in building a satellite station on Mahé. The end of the islands' relative

isolation triggered tourism and concomitant booms in foreign capital investment and the domestic construction industry. Within a few years, the construction of the international airport changed the economy from a traditional agricultural and fishing one into one in which services accounted for the major portion of employment and gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary). The two parties differed on the ways to manage the new tourist industry and to apportion its benefits. The SPUP favored controlling the growth of tourism and at the same time developing the entire economy, whereas the SDP wanted to stimulate the rapid growth of tourism and to establish the islands as an international financial center.

Independence from Britain was the dominant issue between the two parties in the early 1970s, however. The SPUP insisted on cutting the colony's ties with Britain, whereas Mancham argued for even closer association. But when it became plain that the independence issue was popular and Britain showed no interest in retaining close relations, the SDP also shifted to a pro-independence policy. Moreover, the disfavor with which African and Asian nations viewed colonialism had put the SDP into disrepute in the region. The SDP won the election campaign in 1974, but the election provoked angry controversy. The SPUP charged that the results had been rigged; because of the way constituencies had been demarcated, the SDP won thirteen of the fifteen seats with only 52.4 percent of the vote, lending credibility to the charges. Thereafter, relations between the two parties, already personalized and bitter, worsened steadily.

Despite their differences, the two parties formed a coalition under Mancham to lead Seychelles to independence. Five members from each party were added to the Legislative Assembly in an attempt to equalize political representation. One year later, Britain granted the colony complete independence, and on June 29, 1976, the Republic of Seychelles became a sovereign nation, with Mancham as president and René as vice president. As a gesture of goodwill, Britain returned Île Desroches, the Aldabra Islands, and the Farquhar Islands. In addition, Britain made a series of grants to the new nation to smooth the transition to an independent economy. Both parties agreed to support the coalition government until elections were held in 1979.

Coup by René Supporters, 1977

On June 4–5, 1977, sixty supporters of the SPUP who had been training in Tanzania staged a coup and overthrew Mancham while he was in London. René, who denied knowing of the plan, was then sworn in as president and formed a new government.

A year later, the SPUP combined with several smaller parties and redesignated itself the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF), or simply the Front. A new constitution adopted in 1979 stipulated that the SPPF be the sole recognized party. The constitution provided for a strong executive headed by the president and a legislature of twenty-three elected and two appointed members.

In the first election, held in June 1979, René was the single candidate for president. He won with 98 percent of the vote. The results were viewed as a popular endorsement of the socialist policies pursued by the government in the two years following the coup. The SPPF proceeded with its program to set minimum wage levels, raise government salaries, improve housing and health facilities, broaden educational opportunities, increase social security coverage, and generate employment in agriculture and fisheries. The lives of most Seychellois were enhanced, and most citizens appeared to favor the government's policies.

The decision to turn the nation into a one-party state based on socialist ideology, as well as certain initiatives of the government, caused some bitterness, especially among the upper and middle classes. Censorship of the media and control over public expression were unpopular. A number of groups attempted to oust the René government between 1978 and 1987. The most notable was a group of mercenaries who tried to enter the country in 1981 disguised as tourists from South Africa. The mercenaries were exposed as they came through customs at the international airport, but most of them, including their leader, Colonel Michael "Mad Mike" Hoare, escaped after commandeering an Air India passenger plane to South Africa. Although the South African government prosecuted and jailed some of the mercenaries for air hijacking, Hoare testified that South African military and intelligence officials were involved in the coup attempt. During this period, the Seychelles government received support from Tanzania, which deployed troops to the islands to strengthen the government's hand.

Mancham and other exiled opposition figures based principally in London formed several groups that sought to turn international opinion against the René government, stigmatizing it as antidemocratic, procommunist, and pro-Soviet. As part of its efforts to stifle opposition, the government embarked on a campaign in 1987 to acquire parcels of land owned by dissident Seychellois living abroad. The takeovers were not subject to legal challenge, but the amount of compensation—in the form of bonds payable over twenty years—could be appealed in court. The government's authoritarianism finally brought it under growing pressure from its chief patrons—Britain and France. Finally, in 1991 René and the SPPF consented to liberalize the political system, inviting opposition leaders to return to Seychelles and help rewrite the constitution to permit multiparty politics.

Physical Environment

The archipelago consists of 115 islands and thirty prominent rock formations scattered throughout a self-proclaimed exclusive economic zone (EEZ—see Glossary) of more than 1.35 million square kilometers of ocean (see fig. 7). Some forty islands are granitic and lie in a ninety-kilometer radius from Mahé, the main island. The remaining islands are coralline, stretching over a 1,200-kilometer radius from Île aux Vaches in the northeast to the Aldabra Atoll in the southwest. The islands are all small—the aggregate land area is only 444 square kilometers, about two-and-a-half times the size of Washington, D.C.

Mahé is twenty-five kilometers long and no more than eight kilometers wide. It contains the capital and only city, Victoria, an excellent port. Victoria lies approximately 1,600 kilometers east of Mombasa, Kenya; 2,800 kilometers southwest of Bombay; 1,700 kilometers north of Mauritius; and 920 kilometers northeast of Madagascar. The only other important islands by virtue of their size and population are Praslin and La Digue, situated about thirty kilometers to the northeast of Mahé.

The granitic islands are the peaks of the submarine Mascarene Plateau, a continental formation theorized to be either a part of Africa separated when Asia began to drift away from the original single continent of Gondwanaland, or the remnants of a microcontinent that existed up to the beginning of the Tertiary Period, approximately 50 million years ago. The granitic islands are characterized by boulder-covered hills and mountains as high as 940 meters rising abruptly from the sea.

Elsewhere, narrow coastal plains extend to the base of the foothills. Extensively developed coral reefs are found mainly on the east coasts because of the southwest trade winds and equatorial current. Ninety-nine percent of the population is located on the granitic islands, and most are on Mahé.

The coralline islands differ sharply from the granitic in that they are very flat, often rising only a few feet above sea level. They have no fresh water, and very few have a resident population. Many, like Île aux Vaches, Île Denis, the Amirante Isles, Platte Island, and Coetivy Island, are sand cays upon which extensive coconut plantations have been established. Some of the coralline islands consist of uplifted reefs and atolls covered with stunted vegetation. Several of these islands have been important breeding grounds for turtles and birds, as well as the sites of extensive guano deposits, which formerly constituted an important element of the Seychellois economy but now for the most part are depleted. The Aldabra Islands, the largest coralline atoll with an area greater than Mahé, are a sanctuary for rare animals and birds.

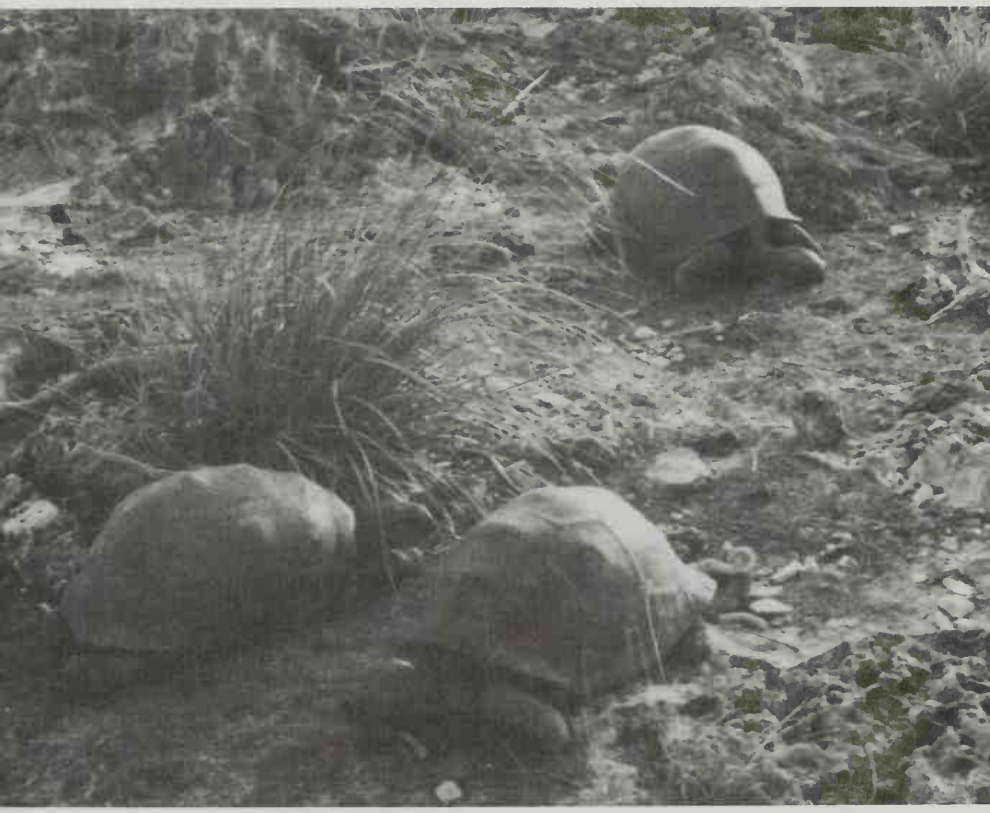
The uniqueness of the Seychelles ecology is reflected in the US$1.8 million project of the Global Environment Trust Fund of the World Bank (see Glossary) entitled Biodiversity Conservation and Marine Pollution Abatement, which began in 1993. The World Bank study for this project states that the islands contain, out of a total of 1,170 flowering plants, "at least seventy-five species of flowering plants, fifteen of birds, three of mammals, thirty of reptiles and amphibians, and several hundred species of snails, insects, spiders and other invertebrates" found nowhere else. In addition, the waters contain more than 900 kinds of fish, of which more than one-third are associated with coral reefs. Specific examples of unique birds are the black paradise flycatcher, the black parrot, the brush warbler, and a flightless rail.

As a result of extensive shipping to Seychelles that brings needed imports and the discharge of commercial tuna fishing, the waters are becoming polluted. Furthermore, goats brought to the Aldabra Islands are destroying much of the vegetation on which giant turtles, including two species unique to Seychelles (the green and the hawksbill), feed or seek shade.

Seychelles began addressing the conservation problem in the late 1960s by creating the Nature Conservancy Commission, later renamed the Seychelles National Environment Commission. A system of national parks and animal preserves

Fisherman holding hawksbill turtle, Aldabra Islands; shell is used to make tortoiseshell objects. Courtesy Brian Kensley

Giant land tortoises, Aldabra Islands Courtesy Brian Kensley



covering 42 percent of the land area and about 26,000 hectares of the surrounding water areas has been set aside. Legislation protects wildlife and bans various destructive practices. In Seychelles' 1990–94 National Development Plan, an effort was made to include in the appropriate economic sectors of the development plan environment and natural resources management aspects.

Also connected with ecology is a World Bank project dealing with the environment and transportation. Launched in 1993 with a loan of US$4.5 million, it is designed to improve the infrastructure of Seychelles with regard to roads and airports or airstrips so as to encourage tourism as a source of income, while simultaneously supporting environmental programs in resource management, conservation, and the elimination of pollution.

The climate of Seychelles is tropical, having little seasonal variation. Temperatures on Mahé rarely rise above 29° C. or drop below 24° C. Humidity is high, but its enervating effect is usually ameliorated by prevailing winds. The southeast monsoon from late May to September brings cooler weather, and the northwest monsoon from March to May, warmer weather. High winds are rare inasmuch as most islands lie outside the Indian Ocean cyclone belt; Mahé suffered the only such storm in its recorded history in 1862. Mean annual rainfall in Mahé averages 2,880 millimeters at sea level and as much as 3,550 millimeters on the mountain slopes. Precipitation is somewhat less on the other islands, averaging as low as 500 millimeters per year on the southernmost coral islands. Because catchment provides most sources of water in Seychelles, yearly variations in rainfall or even brief periods of drought can produce water shortages. Small dams have been built on Mahé since 1969 in an effort to guarantee a reliable water supply, but drought can still be a problem on Mahé and particularly on La Digue.

Population

According to a July 1994 estimate, the nation's population was 72,113—double what it had been in 1951. The growth rate of 0.8 percent annually had slackened from the 2.1 percent rate recorded in the late 1970s. The infant mortality rate in 1994 was estimated at 11.7 per 1,000 live births. There were twenty-two births per 1,000 population annually and only seven deaths per 1,000; the outward migration rate of seven per 1,000 helped stem population growth.

About 90 percent of all Seychellois live on Mahé; most of the remainder live on Praslin (6,000) and La Digue (1,800). The population of the outer coralline group is only about 400, mostly plantation workers gathering coconuts for copra. To restrict population growth on Mahé, the government has encouraged people to move to Praslin and other islands where water is available.

The birthrate has declined by one-third from thirty-two per 1,000 in 1974 and is relatively lower than most African and Asian countries. By 1980 about one-third of all Seychellois women of reproductive age were reported to be using some form of contraception, which is considered unusually high compared with other African and Asian countries. Death rates are exceptionally low, in part because of the young age structure, but also because of the availability of free medical services to all segments of society, and the healthy climate and living conditions. The average life expectancy at birth in 1994 was 66.1 years for males and 73.4 for females.

Ethnic Groups

The population is a relatively homogeneous one of mixed European and African descent, and most citizens consider themselves as Seychellois, possessors of a unique culture and society. Contrary to other Indian Ocean island nations, the Asian population is relatively small; it consists almost entirely of Indians and Chinese. However, the intermixing of the Indian and Chinese communities with the larger society is greater than was common elsewhere. Some twenty *grand blanc* planter families, descendants of the original French settlers, represent a separate group but under the socialist government no longer command the power and social prestige they once had. About 2,000 foreign workers and their families lived in Seychelles in the early 1990s.

Languages

Creole, the mother tongue of 94 percent of the nation in 1990, was adopted as the first official language of the nation in 1981. English is the second language and French the third, all of them officially recognized. The increased emphasis on Creole is designed to facilitate the teaching of reading to primary-level students and to help establish a distinct culture and heritage. Opponents of the René government thought it a mistake to formalize Creole, which had no standardized spelling sys-

tem. They regarded it as a great advantage for Seychellois to be bilingual in French and English; treating Creole as a language of learning would, they feared, be at the expense of French and English.

Creole in Seychelles developed from dialects of southwest France spoken by the original settlers. It consists basically of a French vocabulary with a few Malagasy, Bantu, English, and Hindi words, and has a mixture of Bantu and French syntax. Very little Seychelles Creole literature exists; development of an orthography of the language was completed only in 1981. The government-backed Kreol Institute promotes the use of Creole by developing a dictionary, sponsoring literary competitions, giving instruction in translation, and preparing course materials to teach Creole to foreigners.

More than one-third of Seychellois can use English, and the great majority of younger Seychellois can read English, which is the language of government and commerce. It is the language of the People's Assembly, although speakers may also use Creole or French. The principal journals carry articles in all three languages.

Although discouraged by the René regime as a colonialist language, French continues to carry prestige. It is the language of the Roman Catholic Church and is used by older people in correspondence and in formal situations. Some 40 percent of television transmissions are in French—beamed by satellite to an earth station provided by the French government—and most Seychellois can speak and understand the language.

Social Organization

Class and Social Structure

Several indexes of social status operate. The first is color. Although almost all Seychellois are so racially mixed as to defy classification, light skin remains a status feature because authority in Seychelles traditionally has been vested in a white plantation owner or manager, or later in British officials. Skin color, according to anthropologist Burton Benedict, is distinguished in Seychelles by the terms *blanc* (white), *rouge* (red), or *noir* (black), all of which are applied relatively depending on the speaker's own pigmentation. Economic achievement and material possessions are equally important signs of social status.

According to Benedict, Seychellois are highly status conscious and are anxious to improve their social positions. Posses-

sions, particularly land and substantial homes, are important indicators of status and prestige. Fine clothing, cars, jewelry, and watches are similarly regarded. A willingness to spend freely is, among men, a means to impress others.

Persons with light skin enjoy greater prestige, but the skin shade does not reliably determine social status or position of power in society. Lighter-skinned persons find it easier to advance to managerial or supervisory positions. It is considered advantageous to marry a lighter-skinned person, although a wealthier man of dark skin or a darker-skinned woman with property may not experience such discrimination. Social tensions based on race are almost unknown, and persons of differing racial types mix freely in schools, business, and social gatherings.

A feature of the Seychellois social system is the prevalence of sexual relationships without formal marriage. Most family units take the form of de facto unions known as living *en ménage*. One result of this practice is that nearly three-fourths of all children born in the islands are born out of wedlock. Most of these children are, however, legally acknowledged by their fathers.

The institutionalization of *en ménage* unions as alternatives to legal marriage can be attributed to several factors. The expense of socially required wedding festivities, trousseaus, and household furnishings can exceed a year's income for a laborer. Widely separated economic status of partners, a mother's wish to retain the earning potential of her son, or a previous marriage by one partner may be impediments to marriage. The difficulty and expense of divorce also tend to discourage a legal relationship. Although frowned upon by the church and civil authorities, *en ménage* unions are generally stable and carry little stigma for either partner or for their children. Among women of higher status, prevailing standards of social respectability require that they be married to the men with whom they are living. Sexual fidelity is not as likely to be demanded of husbands, who often enter into liaisons with lower-class women.

Status of Women

Women enjoy the same legal, political, economic, and social rights as men. Women form nearly half of the enrollment at the prestigious Seychelles Polytechnic, the highest level of education on the islands. In 1994 two women held cabinet posts—

the minister of foreign affairs, planning, and environment and the minister of agriculture and marine resources—and women filled other major positions. In the early 1990s, many SPPF branch leaders were women, although in government as a whole women were underrepresented. According to a Department of State human rights report for 1993, "The Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary union cited Seychelles as having the world's highest percentage of female representation in its parliament (at 45.8 percent of the total delegates)."

Seychellois society is essentially matriarchal. Mothers tend to be dominant in the household, controlling most current expenditures and looking after the interests of the children. Men are important for their earning ability, but their domestic role is relatively peripheral. Older women can usually count on financial support from family members living at home or contributions from the earnings of grown children.

Religion

Some 90 percent of the population was Roman Catholic as of 1992. The initial white settlers in Seychelles were Roman Catholics, and the country has remained so, despite ineffective British efforts to establish Protestantism in the islands during the nineteenth century. The nation has been a bishopric since 1890, and mission schools had a virtual monopoly on education until the government took over such schools in 1944. Sunday masses are well attended, and religious holidays are celebrated throughout the nation both as opportunities for the devout to practice their faith and as social events. Practicing Catholicism, like speaking French, confers a certain status by associating its adherents with the white settlers from France.

Approximately 7 percent of Seychellois are Anglicans—most coming from families converted by missionaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Evangelical Protestant churches are active and growing, among them Pentecostals and Seventh-Day Adventists. Some 2 percent of the population are adherents of other faiths, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. No temples or mosques, however, exist on the islands. No restrictions are imposed on religious worship by any of the denominations.

Although clergy and civil authorities disapprove, many Seychellois see little inconsistency between their orthodox religious observance and belief in magic, witchcraft, and sorcery. It is common to consult a local seer—known as a *bonhomme de*

Palm forest on Mahé
Courtesy Brian Kensley

bois or a *bonne femme de bois*—for fortune-telling or to obtain protective amulets or charms, called *gris-gris,* to bring harm to enemies.

Education

Until the mid–1800s, little formal education was available in Seychelles. Both the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches opened mission schools in 1851. The missions continued to operate the schools—the teachers were monks and nuns from abroad—even after the government became responsible for them in 1944. After a technical college opened in 1970, a supply of locally trained teachers became available, and many new schools were established. Since 1981 a system of free education has been in effect requiring attendance by all children in grades one to nine, beginning at age five. Ninety percent of all children also attend nursery school at age four.

The literacy rate for school-aged children had risen to more than 90 percent by the late 1980s. Many older Seychellois had not been taught to read or write in their childhood, but adult education classes helped raise adult literacy from 60 percent to a claimed 85 percent in 1991.

Children are first taught to read and write in Creole. Beginning in grade three, English is used as a teaching language in

certain subjects. French is introduced in grade six. After completing six years of primary school and three years of secondary school, at age fifteen students who wish to continue attend a National Youth Service (NYS) program. Students in the NYS live at an NYS village at Port Launnay on the northwest coast of Mahé, wearing special brown and beige uniforms. In addition to academic training, the students receive practical instruction in gardening, cooking, housekeeping, and livestock raising—one of the aims of the program is to reduce youth unemployment. They are expected to produce much of their own food, cook their own meals, and do their own laundry. Self-government is practiced through group sessions and committees.

From the time the NYS program was instituted in 1981, it met with heated opposition and remained highly unpopular. Students spend the entire period away from home, with parental visits permitted only at designated times at intervals of several months. Many consider the quality of education to be inferior; indoctrination in the socialist policies of the SPPF is part of the curriculum. Nevertheless, failure to attend the NYS makes it difficult to proceed to more advanced study. In 1991 the NYS program was reduced from two years to one year. The total enrollment in that year was 1,394, with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. Those who leave school but do not participate in the NYS can volunteer for a government-administered six-month work program, receiving a training stipend below the minimum wage.

After completing their NY S program, students may attend Seychelles Polytechnic (1,600 students in 1991) for pre-university studies or other training. In 1993, responding to popular pressure, the government eliminated the requirement of NYS participation in order to enter the Polytechnic. However, it strongly encouraged students to complete NYS before beginning to work at age eighteen. The largest number of students were in teacher training (302), business studies (255), humanities and science (226), and hotels and tourism (132). No opportunities for higher education are available on the islands. Instead, university and higher professional courses are usually pursued through various British, United States, and French scholarship programs.

Seychelles has received funds for developing its educational programs from several multinational sources. These include a grant from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting

Countries (OPEC) in 1988 and a US$9.4 million loan from the African Development Bank in November 1991.

Health and Welfare

Health and nutritional conditions are remarkably good, approaching those of a developed country. The favorable projections of life expectancy are attributable in large degree to a salubrious climate, an absence of infectious diseases commonly associated with the tropics (such as malaria, yellow fever, sleeping sickness, and cholera), and the availability of free medical and hospital services to all Seychellois.

The National Medical Service operated by the Ministry of Health provides free medical treatment to all citizens. The principal medical institution is the 421-bed Victoria Hospital, which has medical, surgical, psychiatric, pediatric, and maternity departments. Five other hospitals and clinics have a combined 113 beds in general wards, and a psychiatric hospital has sixty beds. In addition, a total of twenty-five outpatient clinics exist on Mahé, Praslin, and La Digue. Most of the forty-eight doctors and ten dentists come from overseas; few Seychellois who go abroad for training return to practice medicine.

Improvements in prenatal and postnatal care since the late 1970s have brought the infant mortality rate down from more than fifty per 1,000 live births in 1978 to an estimated 11.7 in 1994, a rate comparable to that of Western Europe. Some 90 percent of protein in the diet is derived from fish, which, along with lentils, rice, and fruits, gives most families access to a reasonably nutritious diet. Nevertheless, many prevailing health problems, especially among children, result from poverty, limited education, poor housing, polluted water, and unbalanced diets.

Local threats to health include intestinal parasites such as hookworm and tapeworm. Venereal diseases are widespread, and local programs to contain their spread have been described as ineffective. Dengue fever epidemics—although not fatal—have periodically struck large segments of the population, causing severe discomfort and unpleasant aftereffects. Alcoholism is a serious problem, and narcotic use—mainly of marijuana and heroin—is beginning to appear among the young. In late November 1992, the Ministry of Health confirmed the first case of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS); a year previously the ministry had announced that

twenty people tested positive for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Under the social security law, employers and employees contribute to a national pension program that gives retirees a modest pension. Self-employed persons contribute by paying 15 percent of gross earnings. The government also has a program to provide low-cost housing, housing loans, and building plots, although the program is said to reflect favoritism on behalf of SPPF supporters.

The Economy

A notable feature of the Seychelles economy was the high per capita GDP of US$5,900 in 1992, some fifteen times the average of sub-Saharan Africa. Total GDP was estimated at US$407 million in 1992. Economic growth, which had proceeded at a strong 5 to 6 percent annually since the mid-1980s, resumed in 1992 at an estimated rate of 4 percent.

The major source of economic activity is the tourist industry and tourist-related services in terms of employment, foreign earnings, construction, and banking. Although earnings from the tourism sector are impressive, providing about 50 percent of GDP, they are offset by the need to import large amounts of food, fuels, construction materials, and equipment, costing some 70 percent of tourism income. Gross tourism foreign exchange earnings in 1993 were SRe607 million (for value of the Seychelles rupee—see Glossary). Moreover, the possibilities for expanding tourism are limited, and it is vulnerable to unpredictable shifts in demand, as occurred in 1991 when the Persian Gulf War contributed to a sharp decline from 103,900 tourists in 1990 to 90,000 in 1991. By 1993 there was a strong recovery in the tourist trade, bringing more than 116,000 visitors.

Hoping to avoid overdependence on tourism, the government has attempted to diversify economic activity by encouraging new industries and revitalizing traditional exports. Production of food and other items is being emphasized to reduce the heavy burden of imports needed to sustain tourism. Development of the nation's marine resources remains a principal governmental goal, pursued by expanding indigenous coastal fisheries and by profiting from fees and services provided to foreign fishing fleets operating in Seychelles' EEZ. Small traditional fishing accounted for less than 3 percent of

GDP in the early 1990s but provided jobs for about 1,500 persons and growing foreign-exchange earnings.

Seychelles' traditional marketings of copra and cinnamon bark had declined to an insignificant level by 1991. The government's goal of achieving 60 percent self-sufficiency in food has not been realized, although its efforts have resulted in increases in fruit, vegetable, meat (mainly chicken and pork), and tea production.

Parastatal (mixed government and private) companies proliferated in many sectors of the economy under the René regime. State-owned and parastatal companies accounted for more than half the country's GDP and about two-thirds of formal employment. The parastatals enjoyed mixed success, and by 1992 the government had begun to divest itself of selected enterprises.

Seychelles traditionally has run a large trade deficit because of the need to import nearly all manufactured and most agricultural commodities. Much of the gap has been covered by revenues from the tourism sector and to a lesser extent by remittances from Seychellois workers abroad and by overseas loans and grants.

Seychelles has been relatively successful in containing inflation. The retail price index, which includes some goods and services whose prices are set by the government, rose by 3.3 percent in 1992 and 4.0 percent in 1993. The generally stable price environment has resulted in part from wage discipline, the weakness in world oil prices, and a policy of importing from countries with low prices, including South Africa, whose currency has depreciated steadily against the Seychelles rupee.

To support its anti-inflationary strategy, the government has pursued a liberal exchange-rate policy. Since 1979 the rupee has been pegged to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF—see Glossary) special drawing right (SDR—see Glossary). The rupee's relative stability has contributed to the stability of domestic prices.

Government Role

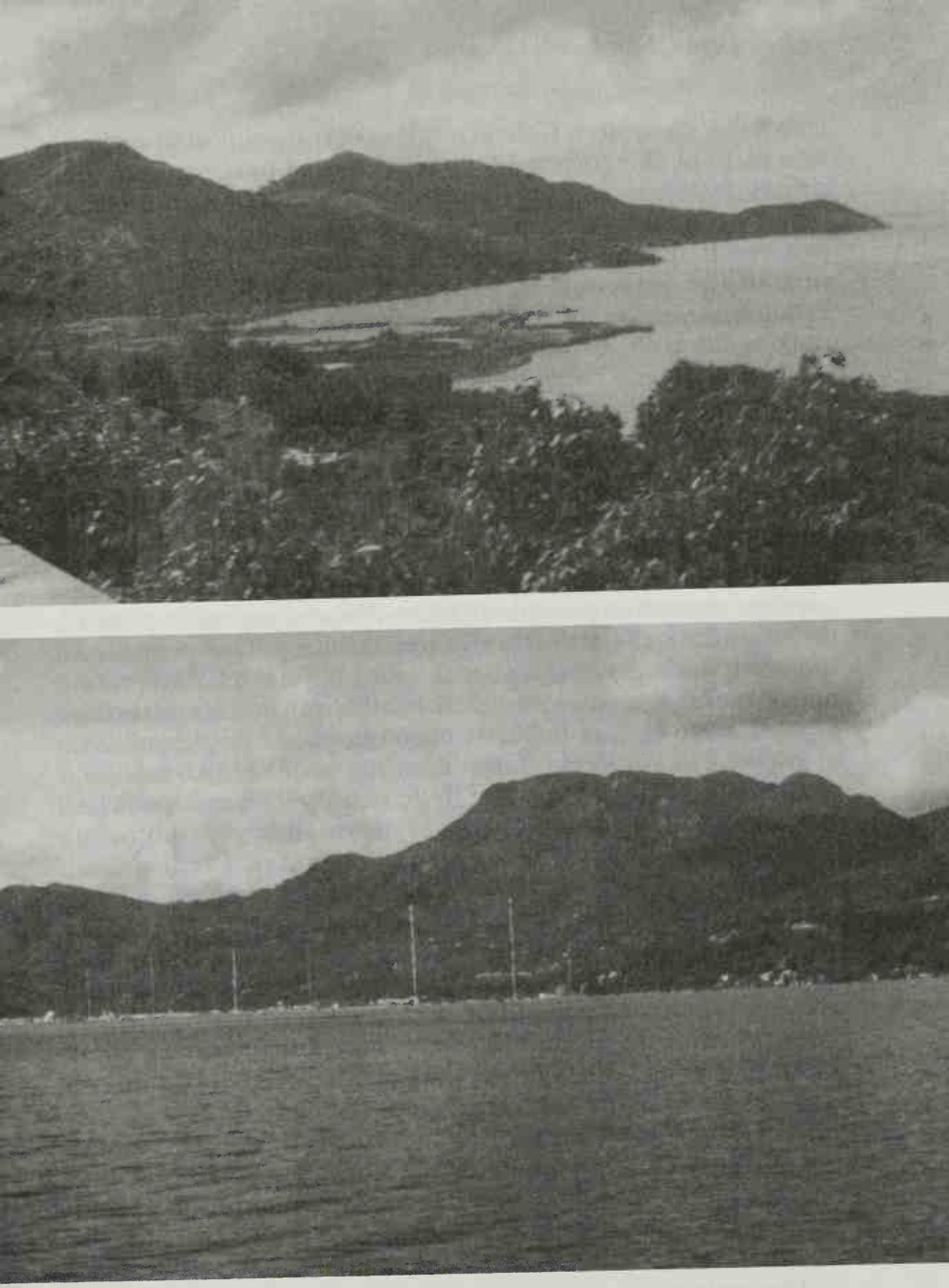
Under the socialist policies of President René, the government has taken a leading role in developing the national economy. Since 1978, the Ministry of Planning and Development has drawn up very detailed "rolling" five-year development plans, which are updated and extended every year. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for economic decisions and bud-

getary policy. A separate Monetary Authority supervises the banking system and manages the money supply. Although foreign banks operate branches in Seychelles, the government owns the two local banks—the Development Bank of Seychelles, which mobilizes resources to fund development programs, and the Seychelles Savings Bank, a bank for savings and current accounts.

The expansion of parastatal companies since 1979, when the first such institution was created, has had primary economic significance. By 1988 the number of parastatals had reached thirty-five, but in 1994 there were indications that the government's more liberal economic policy would probably reduce the role and number of parastatals. Among the most important organizations of the public sector is the Seychelles National Investment Corporation, whose role is to promote economic development in areas neglected by private enterprise or to become a major stockholder in private companies that encounter economic difficulties. The most powerful of the state enterprises is the Seychelles Marketing Board (SMB), which is the sole importer of key commodities, exercises controls over other imports, and regulates prices, production, and distribution of most goods and services.

The state-owned Seychelles Timber Company has responsibility for reforestation and for operating the government sawmill at Grande Anse. The Fishing Development Company controls industrial tuna fishing and the tuna cannery operated as a joint venture with France. Air Seychelles, a parastatal, flies both international and interisland routes, making a critical contribution to the tourist industry. The Islands Development Company (IDC) was established in 1980 to develop agriculture, tourism, and guano production on ten of the outlying islands—guano deposits have since been depleted. A hotel complex on Île Desroches is among the projects conducted by the IDC. Opened in 1988, the Desroches resort is managed by another parastatal, Islands Resorts. A US$12 million shrimp farming project on Coetivy Island remained in the final development stage in 1992. The high initial investment and heavy transport costs raised doubts about its viability, although a study has indicated that about 8 tons of shrimp could be caught annually in the area.

Despite the government's strong involvement in the economy, it has never imposed a policy of forced nationalization. Rather, the government encourages foreign investment, prefer-



Victoria, Mahé, capital of Seychelles
Courtesy Brian Kensley

ably as joint ventures. Concurrently with the political liberalization in 1992, the government has attempted to strengthen the private sector, announcing measures to attract investment and planning to divest some state-owned companies. Among companies scheduled for privatization are the agro-industrial division of the SMB and Stationery, Printing, and Computer Equipment, to be sold as three separate enterprises. A parastatal holding 65 percent of Seychelles hotel assets reportedly is ready to sell some hotels or to privatize their management. Private investors nevertheless remain cautious because of the continued high level of state economic control.

Budget

The government budget for 1993 foresaw total expenditures of SRe1,335.6 million consisting of SRe1,078.7 million in current expenditures, SRe232.5 million in capital expenditures, and SRe24.4 million in net lending. The proposed spending was 6 percent higher than the 1992 level. Total revenues were budgeted at SRe1,186.1 million in 1993, consisting of SRe1,122.6 million in current revenues and SRe63.5 million in grants. The projected deficit for 1993 was SRe149.5 million, compared with a 1992 budget deficit of SRe94.5 million. The 1994 budget projected a 6 percent decrease in expenditures, leading to a surplus of SRe64 million rather than a deficit. The 1994 budget also relaxed import controls and set forth a five-year development plan to increase private-sector economic participation, increase employment and foreign-exchange earnings, reduce taxation and the inflation rate, and improve social welfare. Interest on the public debt consumed more than 18 percent of current expenditures.

Among other leading components of 1993 current outlays were education (10.7 percent), health (7.0 percent), transportation and tourism (5.6 percent), and subsidies to parastatals (4.3 percent). Defense spending was cut by 35 percent between 1992 and 1993—from 7.8 percent to 5.0 percent of the total budget. The government's contribution to the SPPF—SRe9.6 million in 1991 and 1992—was eliminated in 1993.

The main revenue sources were a trade tax that included taxes on imports (50 percent of total revenues estimated for 1993) and a business tax based on profits (12.4 percent of total revenue). Various fees, charges, dividends and interest, rents, and Social Security Fund transfers made up most of the remaining budget receipts. The government's program of

social services, defense spending, and new parastatals had generated growing budget deficits that peaked at 20 percent of GDP in the recession year of 1986. Austerity in public spending and new taxes had resulted in some improvement; by 1992 the deficit was limited to 4.4 percent of GDP but was expected to rise to 6.5 percent in 1993. The continued excess of spending over receipts, combined with lower foreign assistance levels, remains a worrisome problem.

Economic Development

The government has detailed its economic development targets in successive five-year plans. The plan for 1985–89 emphasized tourism, agriculture, and fisheries. It proposed to improve the balance of payments by achieving 60 percent self-sufficiency in food and by stimulating tourism. Improved productivity, increased exports, and a lowering of the unemployment level were additional aims. The 1990–94 plan stressed the need to attract foreign investment and the need for greater food self-sufficiency. A ten-year plan for protecting the environment was supported by a pledge of US$40 million from World Bank donors. The total projected investment was SRe4,206 million in constant 1989 prices, of which 26 percent would be funded by the public sector. It was not expected, however, that the investment goals would be realized. Capital spending was aimed at improved living standards—water supplies, waste disposal, and housing. Tourism and related investments were also regarded as priorities.

An ambitious government initiative is the East Coast Development Plan to reclaim land on Mahé for residential and commercial construction. Some 800 new homes are to be built to ease the housing shortage among ordinary Seychellois. In addition, part of the area will be reserved for luxury housing and tourist facilities. In 1993 the government announced that it would seek private-sector investment to help complete this major project.

Labor

The government is the nation's largest employer, providing jobs for 38 percent of the wage-earning labor force in 1991. The parastatal sector employed a further 26 percent, leaving only 36 percent of workers in the private sector. The total labor force was about 29,600 in 1991; some 19 percent were domestic workers, self-employed, or family workers. The remainder were

in formal wage employment. Hotel and restaurant workers formed the largest single category (14.1 percent), followed by transportation (13.8 percent), manufacturing (11.2 percent), public administration (10.9 percent), and agriculture (9.1 percent).

The government establishes official minimum wages depending upon job classification, although most jobs are paid at well above the rates set. Average monthly earnings as of mid-1992 were about SRe2,750 in the government and parastatal sectors and SRe2,260 in the private sector. The differential was caused by high 1992 salary increases for government and parastatal workers amounting to 12.3 percent and 14.3 percent, respectively, which the private sector could not match. The Central Bank of Seychelles has noted that wage inflation, which averaged 10.8 percent for the entire labor force, greatly exceeded the retail price inflation of 3.3 percent and could not be justified by corresponding productivity gains. The bank feared that the government's salary awards would add to existing pressures on the country's cost base, its external competitiveness, and its external accounts.

The sole labor union is the National Workers' Union (NWU), which is controlled by the SPPF. All workers are members because a percentage of their social security contributions are earmarked for union dues. Workers can elect their own shop stewards, but candidates are screened by the NWU executive secretariat, which can dismiss any elected shop steward. Workers can strike only with the permission of the SPPF Central Committee. Nevertheless, two labor disputes occurred in the changed 1992 political environment. Workers in the main electrical generating plant organized a brief shutdown, winning increased allowances in their compensation packages, and stevedores struck for better conditions and higher compensation. To avoid disruption at a critical time for the industrial fisheries sector, the government essentially met the stevedores' demands.

In November 1993, the National Assembly passed the Trade Union Industrial Act, which gave Seychellois workers the right to join and to form their own unions. Any such unions, however, may not compete with the overall NWU. One independent union was formed in late 1993.

In addition to approving collective bargaining agreements and reviewing private wage scales, the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs can enforce employment conditions and

benefits. With many free or subsidized public services, notably education and health, even workers at the low end of the pay scale can sustain their families at a basic level. Even so, many families rely on two or more incomes to deal with the high price structure.

The government has set a legal work week of forty or thirty-five hours, depending on the occupation. With overtime, the work week may not exceed sixty hours. Workers are entitled to a thirty-minute break each day and twenty-one days of paid annual leave. Comprehensive occupational health and safety regulations are enforced through regular workplace visits.

Agriculture

The Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources in 1993 gave up the management of five state-owned farms, which were divided into small plots and leased to individuals. In addition, the agricultural sector consisted of state farms of the Seychelles Agricultural Development Company (Sadeco) and the outer islands managed by the IDC; three other large holdings producing mainly coconuts, cinnamon, and tea; about 250 families engaged in full-time production of foodstuffs; and an estimated 700 families working on a part-time basis. Many households cultivate gardens and raise livestock for home consumption.

The total cultivable area of the islands is only about 400 hectares. Although rainfall is abundant, wet and dry seasons are sharply defined. Better irrigation and drainage systems are needed to improve food crops. The government has taken various measures to reduce dependency on imported foods, including deregulating production and marketing and reducing the trade tax on fertilizers and equipment. As a result, vegetable and fruit production climbed from 505 tons in 1990 to 1,170 tons in 1992. This increase failed to be matched by a commensurate decrease in imports of fruits and vegetables, which reached 3,471 tons in 1992. Local consumption had apparently increased, and substitution between imported and domestic foodstuffs was possible only to a limited degree. In most cases, imported produce is significantly cheaper in spite of air freight, import taxes, and other costs, necessitating a high import markup by the SMB to prevent disruption of domestic production. Neither rice, a dietary staple, nor other grains can be grown on the islands.

The expansion of livestock production is hampered by encroachment of housing and other development on agricultural land as well as by increased labor and animal feed costs. The number of cattle slaughtered in 1992 (329 head) was virtually unchanged from five years earlier. The slaughter of pigs (4,598) was about 45 percent higher than 1987, and chicken production (439,068) had risen by 60 percent.

The two traditional export crops of copra—dried coconut meat from which an oil is produced—and cinnamon have declined greatly because of the high cost of production and pressure from low-cost competitors on the international market. Vanilla, formerly important, is produced on a very small scale. Tea grown on the misty slopes of Mahé is a more recent plantation crop, serving mainly the local market.

Fisheries

The fisheries sector is divided into two distinct categories: traditional fishing by a domestic fleet of some 400 vessels; and industrial tuna fishing by foreign vessels, which began to develop in the mid-1970s and has emerged as a major revenue source. The domestic inshore fleet consists mainly of open boats equipped with inboard or outboard engines, operating within a radius of sixteen to forty-eight kilometers of the main islands. Domestic offshore operations on banks surrounding the Mahé group and the Amirantes Isles are conducted by handlines from larger boats with sleeping quarters. Most of the catch is frozen. The fish division of the SMB bought and distributed fish landed on the three main islands to avoid serious price fluctuations. An export trade in the local catch developed after the opening of the international airport made possible deliveries to Europe and other markets.

Local consumption of fish traditionally has been high, and has been estimated at eighty-five kilograms per capita annually in the early 1990s. The local catch is also an important menu item at the tourist hotels. The domestic fisheries catch reached 5,734 tons in 1992, about 10 percent of which was accounted for by a new industrial fishing venture, the *Pêcheur Breton* mothership-dory enterprise.

Beyond 100 kilometers from the Seychelles coasts, fishing is conducted by some fifty-five French and Spanish purse seiners based at Victoria. (The Spanish vessels briefly shifted their base to Mombasa in 1992 but returned when the Seychelles government reduced its port charges.) Some 160,000 tons of tuna

were transshipped through Victoria in 1992, of which 45,000 tons were reported by the vessels' owners to have been fished within Seychelles' EEZ. The Seychelles authorities had no way of verifying these claims.

In 1991 Seychelles, Mauritius, and Madagascar formed the Tuna Fishing Association to promote their interests. In addition, a series of three-year agreements granted European Community (EC—see Glossary) vessels the right to fish in the Seychelles EEZ. The fourth such agreement, signed in early 1993, was expected to generate US$13.5 million annually. The islands' economy also benefits from the resulting business activity at Victoria in the form of port services, stevedoring, and ship chandling. The Seychelles government had leased one purse seiner to profit more directly from the tuna industry, and is building ten seiners, but the project has encountered financial difficulties.

In 1992 the Seychelles Fishing Authority issued 292 licenses to long-lines fishing vessels mainly from Taiwan and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). These vessels make few calls at Victoria, offloading their catches onto motherships in mid-ocean. Seychelles is unable to carry out naval and air surveillance of possible illegal fishing, especially in more remote parts of the EEZ. There is a strong presumption, however, that unauthorized use is being made of its fishing grounds.

The tuna canning plant opened in 1987, with 70 percent of its capital of Seychelles origin and 30 percent invested by a French cooperative; the plant is designed to process 8,000 to 10,000 tons of fish a year. It employs 425 people, mostly women, and has brought a rapid growth of export earnings, reaching US$12.3 million by 1991. The net gain in balance of payments was less because the operation required some imports, notably the cans, which could not be produced domestically.

Oil

Seychelles depends on imported petroleum to meet its domestic power requirements. Following the increase in oil prices in 1990, fuel accounted for nearly 8.6 percent of the nation's import bill, exclusive of reexports. The possibility of commercially exploitable offshore oil led to the granting of exploration rights in 1977 to a consortium headed by Amoco Oil Company. Amoco later bought out its partners and

acquired additional exploration rights but ceased drilling in 1986 when all of its test wells proved dry.

The government embarked on a new program to interest oil companies in exploration in 1985 with technical assistance from Norway in preparing feasibility studies. In 1987 the British Enterprise Oil Company and the United States Texaco Corporation obtained rights for areas south and west of Mahé. After completing promising seismic studies, Enterprise announced plans to begin drilling in 1995. The Seychelles government retains rights to participate in joint development of the concession if commercial quantities of oil are found. In August 1990, Ultramar Canada, Inc. stated that it had an agreement to search 10,200 square kilometers of seabed northeast of Mahé.

Manufacturing

Owing to the small size of the local market and the lack of raw materials, manufacturing occurs on a very limited scale. As of 1991, only 2,563 persons were employed in a total of eighty-eight enterprises, twelve of them parastatals. Most employed fewer than ten people, and only five firms employed as many as 100. A number are import-substitution industries (see Glossary), the largest of which is a brewery and soft drink plant. Other firms include cigarette, clothing, paint, plastics, and furniture factories, cinnamon and coconut processing plants, and some handicrafts catering to the tourist industry. To encourage foreign interest in the manufacturing sector, the government has developed a new investment code guaranteeing full repatriation of profits and capital, protection against nationalization, free import of capital goods, and other incentives. The government reserves the right, however, to require that the state share an interest in larger-scale industrial activities.

Tourism

Tourism is the most important nongovernment sector of the economy. About 15 percent of the formal work force is directly employed in tourism, and employment in construction, banking, transportation, and other activities is closely tied to the tourist industry. Foreign-exchange gross earnings from tourism were SRe607 million in 1993. The direct contribution of the tourism sector to GDP was estimated at 50 percent, and it provides about 70 percent of total foreign-exchange earnings. Although difficult to measure, the import content of tourism

expenditures is high, so net tourism earnings are significantly lower.

The tourist industry was born with the completion of the international airport in 1971, advancing rapidly to a level of 77,400 arrivals in 1979. After slackening in the early 1980s, growth was restored through the introduction of casinos, vigorous advertising campaigns, and more competitive pricing. After a decline to 90,050 in 1991 because of the Persian Gulf War, the number of visitors rose to more than 116,000 in 1993. In 1991 France was the leading source of tourists, followed by Britain, Germany, Italy, and South Africa. Europe provided 80 percent of the total tourists and Africa—mostly South Africa and Reunion—most of the remainder. European tourists are considered the most lucrative in terms of length of stay and per capita spending.

Under the 1990–94 development plan, which emphasizes that the growth of tourism should not be at the expense of the environment, the number of beds on the islands of Mahé, Praslin, and La Digue is to be limited to 4,000. Increases in total capacity are to be achieved by developing the outer islands. To avoid future threats to the natural attractions of the islands, 150,000 tourists per year are regarded as the ultimate ceiling. The higher cost of accommodations and travel, deficiencies in services and maintenance of facilities, and a limited range of diversions handicap Seychelles in attracting vacationers at the expense of other Indian Ocean tourist destinations.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Cars and buses are the principal means of transportation; Seychelles has no railroads. The total road network as of 1994 was 302 kilometers, of which 202 kilometers were hard surfaced. Road conditions on the island of Mahé are for the most part excellent. Vehicle registrations consist of 4,072 private cars, 216 buses, 1,105 commercial vehicles, and 102 motorcycles. Between 1983 and 1986, car imports were prohibited to conserve foreign exchange. Under a quota system subsequently introduced, vehicle imports were allowed to rise to 1,070 in 1989.

Mahé has an international airport and a good harbor. A government ferry service links Mahé to the nearby islands of Praslin and La Digue. Private vessels serve some smaller islands, but in the more remote islands service is less frequent and is primarily for loading copra and delivering supplies. In April 1994,

Seychelles Shipping Line was founded to provide additional international service.

Seychelles has fourteen airports or airstrips, eight with hard-surfaced runways. The state airline, Air Seychelles, was converted from an interisland to an international carrier in 1983 to offset the effects of termination of air service by British Airways. In 1989 it purchased a Boeing 767, followed in 1993 by a Boeing 757 on a lease-purchase arrangement. The larger 767 flies to northern European cities, such as London, Frankfurt, and Zurich, and the 757 provides service to Johannesburg, Nairobi, Bahrain, Dubayy, Singapore, Rome, Paris and Madrid. The airline also has four de Havilland DHC–6 Twin Otters and one Pilatus Britten-Norman Islander. In addition, five international carriers serve the airport on Mahé. Air Seychelles' share of international traffic was 35 percent in 1992, which it hoped to expand to more than 40 percent.

Seychelles has an air traffic control center covering some 2.6 million square kilometers between the east coast of Africa and the Indian subcontinent. The center opened in June 1991 and has taken over some of the responsibilities that Somalia handled; it serves seventeen international airlines.

Seychelles has good telecommunications links with all parts of the world by satellite and telephone service on the islands of Mahé, Praslin, and La Digue. Direct radio communications link the outer islands to Mahé and to African coastal countries. Some 13,000 telephone lines were in use as of 1994, along with more than 200 telex and facsimile machines. In 1994 some 40,000 radios and 13,000 television sets could receive programs of the government-owned Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation. With the help of three relay stations, television signals are available to between 75 and 80 percent of the population. The television stations carry foreign programming beamed to an Indian Ocean International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) earth station. There are two amplitude modulation (AM) radio stations, one government and the other a missionary system licensed to broadcast both local and international religious programs.

Foreign Trade

Seychelles has experienced recurrent foreign-exchange problems because of its limited export potential and fluctuations in tourist traffic. Growing national income has been accompanied by pressures for increased imports of manufac-

tured consumer goods that cannot be produced domestically. In 1991 the government took measures to restrain imports, and in 1992 it imposed surcharges on luxury goods, in addition to taking other actions to restrict domestic spending.

Until 1987 the nation's principal export was fresh and frozen fish, followed by high-quality copra, for which Pakistan, the leading importer, paid premium prices. Cinnamon bark and shark fins were the only other exports of consequence. Reexports, mainly of tourist-related duty-free items and petroleum products for aircraft and ships, were considerably higher than earnings from merchandise exports. From 1987 onward, canned tuna dominated the islands' export trade. With a value of SRe64.1 million, canned tuna constituted 73 percent of all domestic exports in 1991. Fresh and frozen fish exports brought SRe17.7 million, but copra and cinnamon had shrunk to insignificant levels.

France had been the principal destination of Seychelles exports for many years, sometimes absorbing more than 60 percent of the islands' products. In 1991 the Seychelles trade pattern shifted sharply in favor of Britain (52.7 percent of total exports), followed by France (22.8 percent), and Reunion (13.6 percent). Both Reunion and Mauritius are leading customers for frozen fish.

Seychelles imports a broad range of foods, manufactured goods, machinery, and transportation equipment. The largest single category is petroleum fuels and lubricants, although much of this is reexported through servicing of ships and aircraft. Seychelles' main suppliers in 1991 were Bahrain, South Africa, Britain, Singapore, and France. Because of its high import dependence, the country's visible trade is always heavily in deficit. In 1991 its total of domestic exports and reexports (SR258 million) was only 28 percent of total imports (SR910 million). Gross receipts from tourism usually cover some 60 percent of imports but fall short of bridging the gap in the balance of payments. In 1993 Seychelles joined the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa, which should improve its trade because of greater currency convertibility, particularly with Mauritius.

Government and Politics

Between 1979 and 1993, Seychelles was governed under a single-party socialist system. President René, who had assumed power in a military coup d'état in 1977, had been the sole can-

didate in the presidential elections of 1979, 1984, and 1989, each time winning an affirmative vote of more than 90 percent.

The SPPF agreed to relinquish its monopoly of power in December 1991 when a party congress approved René's proposal to allow other political groups to be registered (see Return to a Multiparty System, this ch.). Groups receiving sufficient popular support were permitted to take part in revising the constitution. A first effort to produce a new constitution failed in a referendum in November 1992, but after further negotiations constitutional changes were approved the following June. Multiparty elections followed in July 1993 in which René and the SPPF were again victorious.

Governmental System, 1979–93

Under the constitution that took effect in 1979, all political activity, in particular that regarding the formulation and debate of policy, was conducted under the auspices of the SPPF, or Front. The party constitution was attached as a supplement to the national constitution. The president, as head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, was nominated by the national congress of the SPPF and stood for election on a yes-no basis. All Seychellois aged seventeen or older could vote. The president served a five-year term and could be elected no more than three times in succession.

The constitution provided few checks on executive powers. The president appointed a cabinet without review by the People's Assembly. The latter consisted of twenty-three members elected for four-year terms from twenty-three constituencies, plus two members named by the president to represent the inner and outer islands. The president appointed the chair of the assembly. The SPPF selected candidates for assembly seats. In some constituencies, only one candidate was nominated, but in others the voters could choose from as many as three SPPF nominees. The legislature exercised no independent role, simply enacting into law bills proposed by the executive branch. Debates on issues occurred and were reported in the media, but criticism of the president or the government was not tolerated.

Return to a Multiparty System

Several factors contributed to the shift away from single-party rule. Political changes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and a movement toward multiparty systems in

Africa, left Seychelles conspicuously out of step with trends in the rest of the world. Britain and France trimmed their foreign aid programs, tying future aid to progress on the political front. Exiled Seychelles political figures were active in drawing attention to the autocratic features of the Seychelles system (see Opposition Movements and Interest Groups, this ch.). In addition, domestic opposition to domination by the SPPF had become increasingly open by 1991. The Roman Catholic Church, the business community, and even a few figures in the SPPF had begun to express dissatisfaction. Embryonic local government had been introduced by combining the role of local party branch leaders and district councillors, but this step failed to satisfy sentiment for a more open and democratic system.

On December 3, 1991, at a special congress of the SPPF, President René announced that, beginning in January 1992, political groupings of at least 100 members would be permitted to register and that multiparty elections for a commission to participate in drafting a new constitution would be held six months later. In April 1992, former president James Mancham returned from Britain to lead the New Democratic Party (NDP), which tended to represent the commercial and wealthy in the election campaign. Six additional parties were also registered. In the voting for the constitutional commission, the SPPF gained 58.4 percent of the votes and the NDP, 33.7 percent. None of the other parties gained enough to be represented, although the most successful of these, the Seychellois Party (Parti Seselwa) led by Wavel Ramkalanan and calling for restoring free enterprise, was granted one seat on the commission. As a prelude to the constitutional conference, in September 1992 the government ended the eleven-year state of emergency declared after the 1981 attempted mercenary coup.

During the subsequent constitutional conference, the NDP delegation withdrew, objecting to closed sessions and claiming that the SPPF was forcing through an undemocratic document that reinforced the wide powers of the current president. The SPPF members, who constituted a quorum, continued the commission's work, and the draft constitution was submitted for popular referendum in November 1992.

The vote in favor of the new constitution was 53.7 percent, well short of the 60 percent needed for acceptance. The NDP campaigned for rejection of the draft, claiming that it would perpetuate domination by the president. The draft stipulated

that half of the assembly seats would be allocated by proportional representation based on the presidential election results, thus guaranteeing the president a majority. The Roman Catholic Church also objected to the legalization of abortion called for in the document.

In January 1993, the constitutional commission reconvened to resume negotiations on a new draft constitution. The proceedings were conducted more openly, live television coverage was permitted, and interest groups could submit proposals. The new constitution, which had the support of both the SPPF and the NDP, was approved by 73.9 percent of the voters in a second referendum held on June 18, 1993. The text emphasized human rights and the separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The presidency was again limited to three terms of five years each. The constitution provided for a leader of the opposition to be elected by the National Assembly. The assembly consisted of thirty-three members, twenty-two of them elected and eleven designated by proportional representation.

In the first election under the new constitution, held on July 23, 1993, René was again elected president with 60 percent of the vote. Mancham of the NDP received 37 percent, and Philippe Boullé of the United Opposition Party, a coalition of the smaller parties, received 3 percent. Of the elective seats for the National Assembly, SPPF candidates won twenty-one and the NDP, one. Of the total thirty-three seats in the assembly, twenty-seven went to the SPPF, five to the NDP, and one to the United Opposition Party.

Although Seychelles security forces intimidated some anti-SPPF candidates in 1992, no coercion was reported during the 1993 voting. Fears of loss of jobs and benefits are believed to have played a part in the SPPF victory, however.

Opposition Movements and Interest Groups

Most domestic critics of the government had been silenced by harassment or had been forced into exile during the period of one-party rule from 1977 to 1991. Opposition groups, about which little information is available, included the Movement for Resistance (Mouvement pour la Résistance), Seychelles Liberation Committee, and Seychelles Popular Anti-Marxist Front. Government control over the press and radio and television broadcasts also made it difficult for any opposition views to be heard, although newspapers printed by exiles were smuggled in from abroad or received by fax. The Roman Catholic and

Typical early twentieth-century house, Mahé
Street scene, suburbs of Victoria
Courtesy Brian Kensley

Anglican churches were allowed to comment on social and political issues during broadcasts of religious services, which each was allowed on alternate Sundays. The Roman Catholic bishop exercised a degree of influence and was regarded as one of the few checks against abuse by the René regime.

Until 1992 the Seychelles government tolerated no manifestation of domestic opposition, and opposition figures were forced to carry on their anti-SPPF campaigns from abroad, mainly in London. One exile leader, Gérard Hoarau, head of the Seychelles National Movement, was assassinated in 1985 in a crime that the British police were unable to solve.

The leading member of the exile community, however, was Mancham, former head of the Seychelles Democratic Party who was overthrown as president in 1977. In April 1992, Mancham returned to Seychelles to revive his political movement. Since 1989 Mancham had mounted what he called a "fax revolution" from London, designed to stir up opposition by sending facsimile messages to the 200 fax machines in Seychelles. His program, entitled the Crusade for Democracy, was intended to restore democracy to Seychelles peacefully. Data transmitted by fax included accounts of human rights violations in Seychelles and charges of corruption of the René regime. René's government made it illegal to circulate a seditious fax in Seychelles, but fax owners eluded this regulation by photocopying the original before turning it in to the police. René then sought to counter the criticism through a government media campaign, but in so doing he admitted the existence of an opposition in Seychelles. The end result was that he was obliged to give way and allow multiparty democracy to exist. René recognized Mancham as official Leader of the Opposition, and Mancham received a salary as a government employee with various perquisites.

A third opposition leader was Anglican clergyman Wavel Ramkalanan. In a 1990 radio sermon, Ramkalanan denounced violations of human rights by the René government. Although forced off the air, he continued to distribute copies of his sermons charging government corruption. Ramkalanan formed the Parti Seselwa when the government lifted its political ban but obtained only a 4.4 percent return in the 1992 election for delegates. The Parti Seselwa and five other newly registered parties allied themselves with Mancham's NDP but later broke away to form the United Opposition Party, charging Mancham with being too willing to compromise with René and the SPPF.

The Roman Catholic Church continued to wage opposition to the René regime. In early 1993, the Roman Catholic bishop appeared before the constitutional commission several times to complain about past human rights violations by the René government. He also demanded that the new constitution adopt a ban on abortion and provide for religious education in the schools.

Information Media

During the rule of René and the SPPF through 1991, political expression was tightly controlled. The only daily newspaper was the government-owned *Seychelles Nation,* which had an estimated circulation of 4,000. Published by the Department of Information and Telecommunications, it has a government bias and does not present independent views. *L'Écho des Îles,* a Roman Catholic weekly that touches on current events, is not subject to censorship and often carries views critical of the government. Its circulation is about 2,000. After the political liberalization of 1992, several opposition journals appeared and were allowed to publish without government harassment. Foreign publications are imported and sold without interference.

The state-owned Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), previously closely controlled, was granted autonomous status in 1992. Television and radio continued to show a pro-SPPF bias but began to broadcast material critical of the government in their news. Party political broadcasts were permitted, and SBC coverage of the campaigns and constitutional deliberations was followed closely.

Legal System and Civil Rights

The three-tiered judicial system consists of magistrates' or small claims courts, the Supreme (or trial) Court, and the Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal hears appeals from the Supreme Court in both civil and criminal cases. The Supreme Court has jurisdiction of first instance as well as acting as an appeals court from the magistrates' courts. The system is based on English common law, with influences of the Napoleonic Code (e.g., in tort and contract matters), and customary law. Criminal cases are heard in magistrates' courts or the Supreme Court depending on the seriousness of the charge. Juries are called only in cases of murder or treason. Normal legal protections are extended to defendants. They include public trials, the right of the accused to be present, and the accused's right

to confront witnesses, to appeal, to qualify for bail in most cases, and to be represented by counsel, on a *pro bono* basis if indigent. Judges from other Commonwealth countries—mostly African or Asian—are employed on a contract basis. Judges remain independent from influence by the executive in spite of occasional government pressure.

Under the penal code, a detained person must be brought before a magistrate within forty-eight hours. Before repeal of the Public Security Act in 1992, persons could be detained indefinitely on security charges. The president still has broad personal powers to detain persons regarded as security threats. Since 1989 only a few brief detentions have been reported, all under the Public Security Act.

Much progress in human rights has occurred since political freedoms were restored in 1992. Both military and police engaged in physical harassment of members of opposition parties before the 1992 election of constitutional delegates, but later elections were free of intimidation. The government's control of jobs, housing, and land enables it to reward supporters and discourage dissent. Legislation still on the books in 1994 brings the risk of prosecution and imprisonment for publishing defamatory material against the president or for publishing or possessing publications banned by the government for security reasons. The close association of the armed forces with the SPPF represents a further threat to the full exercise of political rights. In an attempt to mollify domestic and foreign critics, René removed the deputy secretary general of the SPPF as chief of staff of the defense forces in 1992.

The number of crimes and other offenses reported in 1990 was 4,564, of which 35 percent involved violations of traffic ordinances. Thefts, burglaries, housebreaking, and other forms of stealing made up most of the remaining 1,559 offenses. There were five cases of homicide; thirteen cases of rape and indecent assault; 634 aggravated or common assaults; 287 offenses against property such as trespass and arson; and 403 incidents of disorderly conduct. The general trend appears to be downward, although the sharpest decline is in vehicular offenses. Theft in tourist hotels is said to be on the rise. Juvenile delinquency—linked to boredom and isolation—is a growing problem.

Official statistics are not available on sentencing or the prison population. The United States Department of State described living conditions at the Police Bay prison as spartan

but said that in 1993 both the SPPF and opposition members drafting the constitution had been allowed to visit and found conditions satisfactory. Weekly family visits are allowed, and inmates have access to printed materials.

Foreign Relations

Officials characterize the nation's foreign policy as one of "positive nonalignment," under which the country pursues an active and independent course in the conduct of its international relations. Seychelles is a member of the United Nations (UN) and a number of related agencies, including the IMF. It is also a member of the Commonwealth, which has assisted it in transition to multiparty democracy; the Organization of African Unity (OAU); and the Nonaligned Movement. In 1984 Seychelles became linked with Mauritius and Madagascar in the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC); later joined by Comoros and France on behalf of Reunion, the IOC seeks to promote economic cooperation in the region and expand interisland trade.

Although the René government often has sided with the more radical members and causes of the Nonaligned Movement, neither the positions taken nor the radical rhetoric in which they were expressed have been allowed to interfere with essentially pragmatic decisions directly affecting the nation's interests. Seychelles is particularly active in promoting the concept of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, campaigning for the removal of all foreign powers and bases in the region. It is committed to seeking the end of the United States naval presence on Diego Garcia, an island territory of Britain situated about 1,900 kilometers east of Mahé. In a spirit of solidarity with the more radical states of the nonaligned spectrum, Seychelles has pursued political ties with the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Libya, Cuba, Iraq, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). It has supported the former Soviet Union on such controversial issues as its invasion of Afghanistan.

Seychelles also seeks to strengthen its relations with the littoral nations of the Indian Ocean. Such states include other island governments such as those of French-administered Reunion, and independent Maldives and Mauritius as well as more distant nations such as India, Bangladesh, Tanzania, and Kenya. India has been a source of funding for Seychelles projects, and in October 1990 René paid his third visit to the

country following the first meeting of the Indo-Seychelles Joint Commission. The body has continued to meet biennially to discuss common trade, investment, and communications matters. In addition, the navies of the two countries cooperate. In February 1992, the Seychelles minister of education visited Bangladesh to expand bilateral cooperation in education, literacy programs, and rural development. Relations with the Tanzanian government were especially close during the early years of the René regime. Tanzanians had helped train and equip the initiators of the coup that brought René to power, and Tanzanian advisers had helped establish and train the Seychelles People's Liberation Army. With both Tanzania and Kenya, Seychelles has discussed sharing labor resources and with Tanzania, the sharing of its EEZ, tourism promotion, and air flights.

In a practical sense, Seychelles' links with the countries of the West have been much more significant than its political kinship with more radical developing countries. Seychelles has succeeded in attracting relatively large amounts of aid; foreign assistance per capita was US$223 annually in 1975–79, US$295 in 1980–85, and US$331 in 1985–90. France has been the leading donor, providing US$53.9 million in bilateral assistance between 1982 and 1990, in addition to contributions through the World Bank and the EC. Loans placed through the Seychelles Development Bank and direct investments are also important. Examples of projects France has funded for Seychelles included in 1990 assistance to the television station to promote broadcasting in French and provision of devices to improve airport security. Britain has been second in total aid, supplying US$26.1 million in the 1982–90 period. Australia has extended modest amounts of aid, primarily in the form of education and training programs, as part of its efforts to become more fully engaged in the Indian Ocean region. Before the Soviet Union broke up in 1990, it was a significant contributor, granting such aid as fuel oil to assist in patrolling the EEZ. The relative prosperity of the islands has brought a decline in aid from most sources. The British aid level had fallen to about US$1.5 million annually in 1991.

In addition to Peace Corps volunteers working in Seychelles, United States assistance, which earlier amounted to US$3.3 million annually, was US$1.3 million in fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1993. The preeminent feature of United States-Seychelles relations over the preceding thirty years was the

United States Air Force satellite tracking station situated on Mahé on land leased from Seychelles at US$4.5 million annually as of 1993. The Seychelles economy benefits by a further US$5 to US$6 million annually in local spending linked to the station. The facility's complement consists of four uniformed air force personnel, about seventy-five civilian contract personnel who operate the equipment, and some 175 Seychellois employees. United States naval vessels periodically pay calls at Victoria. Restrictions on British and United States ships carrying nuclear weapons had not been enforced since 1983.

Furthermore, Seychelles has sought to promote economic relations, particularly with countries from which it might receive loan assistance. For example, it obtained a US$1 million loan for elementary education in December 1988 from the OPEC Fund for International Development. In August 1990, Seychelles signed an agreement on economic and technological cooperation with China.

The Seychelles government condemned apartheid policies in South Africa and joined in the voting in the OAU for trade sanctions. Although René declared that his government would take steps to reduce Seychelles' reliance on South African products, South Africa's relatively low prices and short delivery times have in fact brought South Africa a growing share of Seychelles' trade. In 1991 South Africa accounted for 13.5 percent of total imports. Numerous factors combined to curtail tourism from South Africa in the early 1980s—the René government's hostility, the apparent South African involvement in the 1981 coup attempt, a reduction in air links, and the recession in South Africa. Beginning in 1988, however, tourist arrivals began to increase dramatically, climbing to 13,570 in 1993.

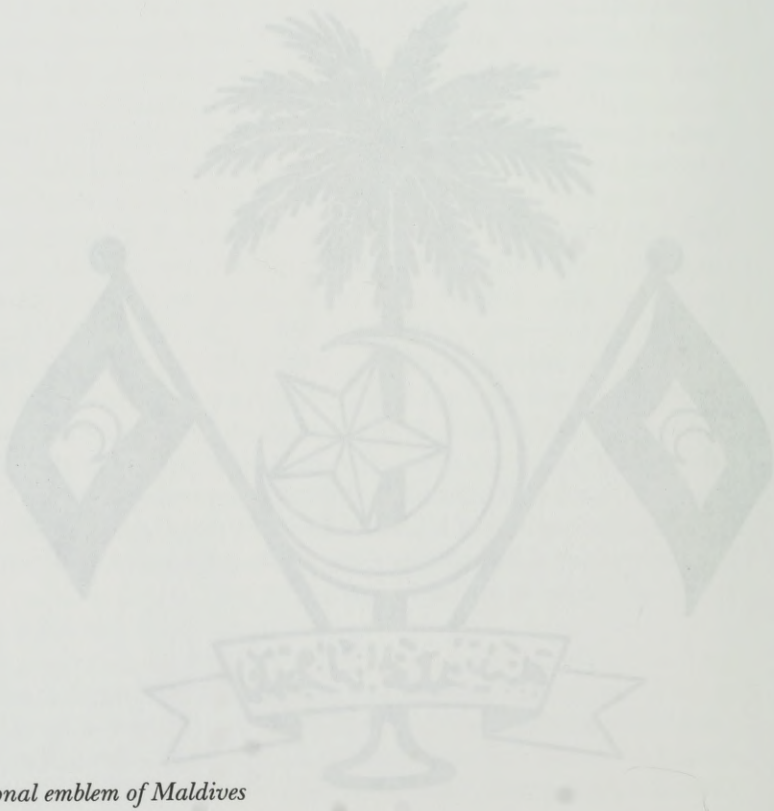
As negotiations proceeded to convert to a multiracial political system in Pretoria, Seychelles modified its hostile political stance, agreeing to enter into commercial and consular relations in April 1992. South Africa also agreed in August 1992 to pay compensation of US$3 million for the abortive 1981 coup. In November 1993 the two countries agreed to establish relations at the ambassadorial level.

* * *

The Seychelles: Unquiet Islands by Marcus F. Franda is an indispensable introduction to the islands' history and society, covering political developments until 1982. An important sociological study, based on fieldwork in 1974–75, is *Men,*

Women, and Money in Seychelles by Marion and Burton Benedict. James R. Mancham's *Paradise Raped: Life, Love, and Power in the Seychelles* provides helpful political background up to 1983. The quarterly reports and annual profile by the Economist Intelligence Unit provide a record of current political and economic developments. The annual reports of the Central Bank of Seychelles contain assessments of the performance of the various sectors of the economy and future prospects. Because relatively little is published on the Seychelles, the reader must rely on such publications as *Africa Economic Digest, Africa Report, New African, Africa Contemporary Record, Economist, Indian Ocean Newsletter, Marchés tropicaux et méditerranéens,* and *Africa Research Bulletin.* The United States Department of State's annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* contains brief but useful appraisals of political and social conditions in Seychelles. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 5. Maldives



National emblem of Maldives

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Maldives.

Short Name: Maldives.

Term for Citizens: Maldivian(s).

Capital: Male.

Date of Independence: July 26, 1965 (from Britain).

Geography

Size: Approximately 298 square kilometers.

Topography: Includes some 1,200 coral islands grouped in double chain of twenty-seven atolls. Most atolls are ring-shaped coral reefs supporting five to ten inhabited islands and twenty to sixty uninhabited islands. Average size of islands one to two kilometers and height of 1.5 meters above sea level.

Climate: Relatively high humidity but sea breezes stir air. Dry season of northeast monsoon December through March; rainy season of southwest monsoon April through October. Annual rainfall 2,540 millimeters in north, 3,810 millimeters in south.

Society

Population: July 1994 estimate 252,077, with a growth rate of 3.6 percent. High birthrate of 44 per 1,000 in 1994.

Ethnic Groups: A homogeneous mixture of Sinhalese, Dravidian, Arab, Australasian, and African groups; also small group of Indian traders.

Languages: Maldivian Dhivehi is common language with loanwords from Arabic, Hindi, and Tamil.

Religion: Sunni Muslim apart from Shia Muslim Indian traders.

Education: Primary (one through five), secondary (six through ten), and higher secondary (eleven and twelve); attendance noncompulsory. Most students attend private Quranic schools that charge fees in contrast to free government schools. No university but some vocational education. Overall literacy claimed as 98.2 percent in 1991.

Health: Waterborne and tropical diseases prevalent because of inadequate drinking water supply. In 1994 life expectancy at birth estimated at: overall 64.7 years, 66.1 for females, 63.2 years for males. In 1994 infant mortality 53.8 per 1,000 live births.

Economy

Gross National Product (GNP): Ranked by United Nations as one of world's twenty-nine least developed countries, World Bank estimated 1991 GNP at US$101 million and per capita income at US$460, with annual growth rate of 6 percent in 1993.

Agriculture: Accounted for almost 10 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1990 and employed about 7 percent of labor force. Major products coconuts, cassava, corn, taro, and sweet potatoes. Most food imported.

Fishing: Provided 15 percent of GDP in 1992 and employed 22 percent of labor force; extensive fishing fleet of domestically built boats; 1992 catch record 82,000 tons. Modernization and refrigeration projects underway.

Tourism: In 1992 represented 17 percent of GDP and major source of foreign exchange. In 1992 had 235,852 tourists, mainly from Germany, Italy, Britain, and Japan.

Exports: Fish and fish products, clothing accessories; main markets Britain, United States, and Sri Lanka.

Imports: Foodstuffs, petroleum products, consumer goods; sources India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Britain.

Balance of Payments: 1992 trade deficit US$110.5 million; current account deficit US$33.2 million.

Currency and Exchange Rate: 1 rufiyaa (Rf) = 100 laari. June 1995 exchange rate US$1.00 = Rf11.77.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Ports: Male, Gan; merchant fleet of some twelve vessels.

Airports: Two with permanent-surface runways: Male and Gan; Air Maldives is national airline.

Telecommunications: (1994) Minimal domestic and international facilities; 8,500 telephones; two amplitude modulation (AM) stations, one frequency modulation (FM) station; one television station; one Indian Ocean International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) earth station.

Government and Politics

Government: Highly centralized presidential system of government, based on 1968 constitution as revised. Islam is official religion. President is elected for renewable five-year term by legislature, or Majlis. Majlis is a unicameral legislature whose members serve five-year terms; combination of elected and appointed members. Muslim sharia law applies to civil and criminal cases; judges appointed by president; courts under minister of justice.

Politics: No organized political parties, but various political factions exist. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom reelected president in 1993; also holds posts of minister of defense and minister of finance.

Foreign Relations: Member of Commonwealth of Nations; has particularly close relations with Britain but seeks to maintain cordial relations with all states. Founder of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (see Glossary) in 1985.

National Security

Defense Forces: No armed forces but National Security Service of 1,800 members perform army, police, and maritime duties.

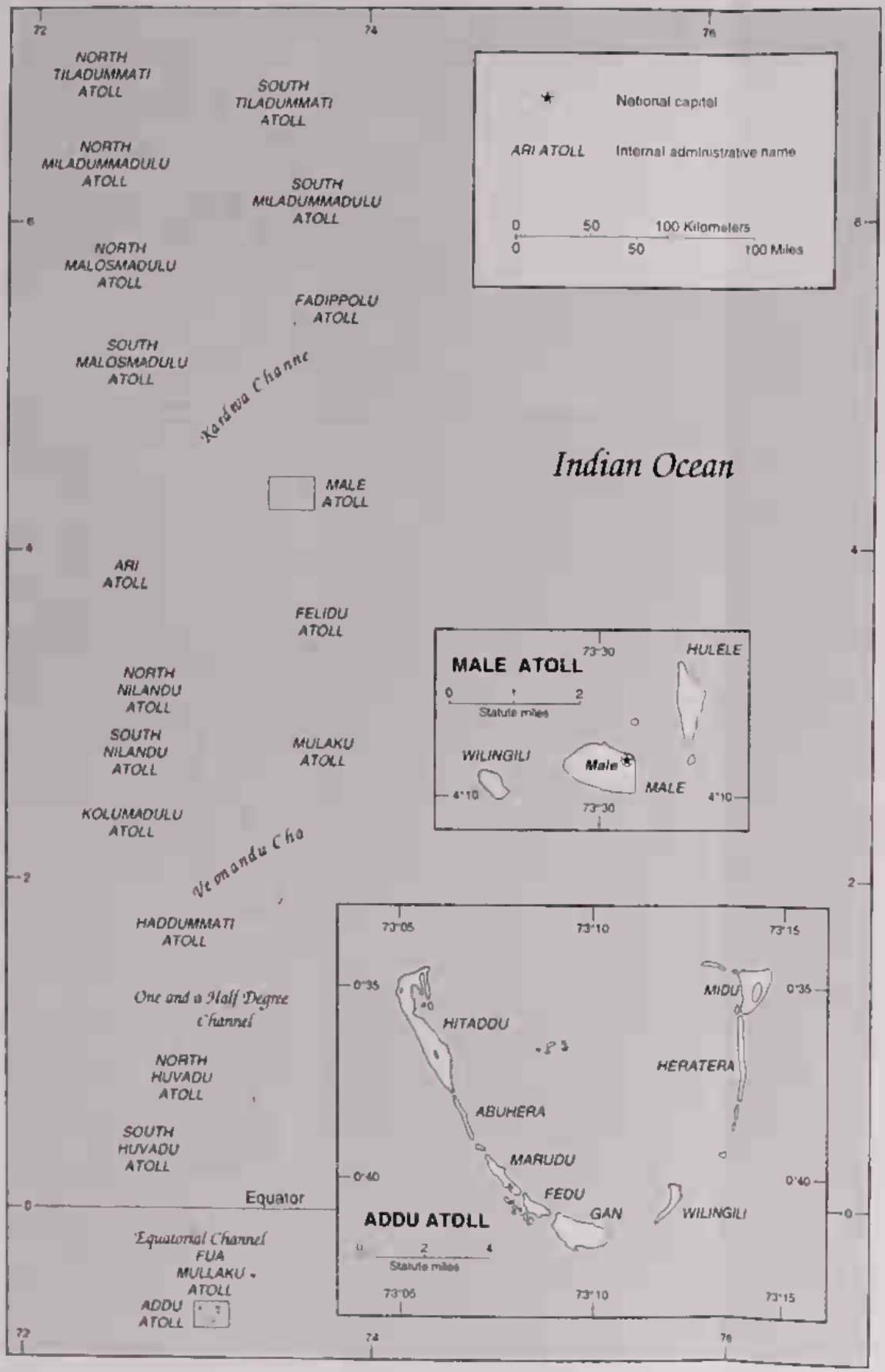


Figure 8. Maldives: Administrative Divisions, 1994

MALDIVES IS AN ISOLATED nation and is among the smallest and poorest countries in the world. In olden times, the islands provided the main source of cowrie shells, then used as currency throughout Asia and parts of the East African coast. Moreover, historically Maldives has had a strategic importance because of its location on the major marine routes of the Indian Ocean. Maldives' nearest neighbors are Sri Lanka and India, both of which have had cultural and economic ties with Maldives for centuries. Although under nominal Portuguese, Dutch, and British influences after the sixteenth century, Maldivians were left to govern themselves under a long line of sultans and occasionally sultanas.

Maldives gained independence in 1965. The British, who had been Maldives' last colonial power, continued to maintain an air base on the island of Gan in the southernmost atoll until 1976. The British departure in 1976 almost immediately triggered foreign speculation about the future of the air base; the Soviet Union requested use of the base, but Maldives refused.

The greatest challenge facing the republic in the early 1990s was the need for rapid economic development and modernization, given the country's limited resource base in fishing and tourism. Concern was also evident over a projected long-term rise in sea level, which would prove disastrous to the low-lying coral islands.

Historical Setting

Maldivians consider the introduction of Islam in A.D. 1153 as the cornerstone of their country's history. Islam remains the state religion in the 1990s. Except for a brief period of Portuguese occupation from 1558–73, Maldives also has remained independent. Because the Muslim religion prohibits images portraying gods, local interest in ancient statues of the pre-Islamic period is not only slight but at times even hostile; villagers have been known to destroy such statues recently unearthed.

Western interest in the archaeological remains of early cultures on Maldives began with the work of H.C.P. Bell, a British commissioner of the Ceylon Civil Service. Bell was shipwrecked on the islands in 1879, and he returned several times to investi-

gate ancient Buddhist ruins. Historians have established that by the fourth century A.D. Theravada Buddhism originating from Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) became the dominant religion of the people of Maldives. Some scholars believe that the name "Maldives" derives from the Sanskrit *maladvipa*, meaning "garland of islands." In the mid-1980s, the Maldivian government allowed the noted explorer and expert on early marine navigation, Thor Heyerdahl, to excavate ancient sites. Heyerdahl studied the ancient mounds, called *hawitta* by the Maldivians, found on many of the atolls. Some of his archaeological discoveries of stone figures and carvings from pre-Islamic civilizations are today exhibited in a side room of the small National Museum on Male.

Heyerdahl's research indicates that as early as 2,000 B.C. Maldives lay on the maritime trading routes of early Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Indus Valley civilizations. Heyerdahl believes that early sun-worshipping seafarers, called the Redin, first settled on the islands. Even today, many mosques in Maldives face the sun and not Mecca, lending credence to this theory. Because building space and materials were scarce, successive cultures constructed their places of worship on the foundations of previous buildings. Heyerdahl thus surmises that these sun-facing mosques were built on the ancient foundations of the Redin culture temples.

The interest of Middle Eastern peoples in Maldives resulted from its strategic location and its abundant supply of cowrie shells, a form of currency widely used throughout Asia and parts of the East African coast since ancient times. Middle Eastern seafarers had just begun to take over the Indian Ocean trade routes in the tenth century A.D. and found Maldives to be an important link in those routes. The importance of the Arabs as traders in the Indian Ocean by the twelfth century A.D. may partly explain why the last Buddhist king of Maldives converted to Islam in the year 1153. The king thereupon adopted the Muslim title and name of Sultan Muhammad al Adil, initiating a series of six dynasties consisting of eighty-four sultans and sultanas that lasted until 1932 when the sultanate became elective. The person responsible for this conversion was a Sunni (see Glossary) Muslim visitor named Abu al Barakat. His venerated tomb now stands on the grounds of Hukuru Mosque, or *miski*, in the capital of Male. Built in 1656, this is the oldest mosque in Maldives. Arab interest in Maldives

also was reflected in the residence there in the 1340s of the well-known North African traveler Ibn Battutah.

In 1558 the Portuguese established themselves on Maldives, which they administered from Goa on India's west coast. Fifteen years later, a local guerrilla leader named Muhammad Thakurufaan organized a popular revolt and drove the Portuguese out of Maldives. This event is now commemorated as National Day, and a small museum and memorial center honor the hero on his home island of Utim in South Tiladummati Atoll.

In the mid-seventeenth century, the Dutch, who had replaced the Portuguese as the dominant power in Ceylon, established hegemony over Maldivian affairs without involving themselves directly in local matters, which were governed according to centuries-old Islamic customs. However, the British expelled the Dutch from Ceylon in 1796 and included Maldives as a British protected area. The status of Maldives as a British protectorate was officially recorded in an 1887 agreement in which the sultan accepted British influence over Maldivian external relations and defense. The British had no presence, however, on the leading island community of Male. They left the islanders alone, as had the Dutch, with regard to internal administration to continue to be regulated by Muslim traditional institutions.

During the British era from 1887 to 1965, Maldives continued to be ruled under a succession of sultans. The sultans were hereditary until 1932 when an attempt was made to make the sultanate elective, thereby limiting the absolute powers of sultans. At that time, a constitution was introduced for the first time, although the sultanate was retained for an additional twenty-one years. Maldives remained a British crown protectorate until 1953 when the sultanate was suspended and the First Republic was declared under the short-lived presidency of Muhammad Amin Didi. This first elected president of the country introduced several reforms. While serving as prime minister during the 1940s, Didi nationalized the fish export industry. As president he is remembered as a reformer of the education system and a promoter of women's rights. Muslim conservatives in Male eventually ousted his government, and during a riot over food shortages, Didi was beaten by a mob and died on a nearby island.

Beginning in the 1950s, political history in Maldives was largely influenced by the British military presence in the

islands. In 1954 the restoration of the sultanate perpetuated the rule of the past. Two years later, Britain obtained permission to reestablish its wartime airfield on Gan in the southernmost Addu Atoll. Maldives granted the British a 100-year lease on Gan that required them to pay £2,000 a year, as well as some forty-four hectares on Hitaddu for radio installations. In 1957, however, the new prime minister, Ibrahim Nasir, called for a review of the agreement in the interest of shortening the lease and increasing the annual payment. But Nasir, who was theoretically responsible to then sultan Muhammad Farid Didi, was challenged in 1959 by a local secessionist movement in the southern atolls that benefited economically from the British presence on Gan (see Maldives, Armed Forces in National Life, ch. 6). This group cut ties with the Maldives government and formed an independent state with Abdulla Afif Didi as president. The short-lived state (1959–62), called the United Suvadivan Republic, had a combined population of 20,000 inhabitants scattered in the atolls then named Suvadiva—since renamed North Huvadu and South Huvadu—and Addu and Fua Mulaku. In 1962 Nasir sent gunboats from Male with government police on board to eliminate elements opposed to his rule. Abdulla Afif Didi fled to the then British colony of Seychelles, where he was granted political asylum.

Meanwhile, in 1960 Maldives allowed Britain to continue to use both the Gan and the Hitaddu facilities for a thirty-year period, with the payment of £750,000 over the period of 1960 to 1965 for the purpose of Maldives' economic development.

On July 26, 1965, Maldives gained independence under an agreement signed with Britain. The British government retained the use of the Gan and Hitaddu facilities. In a national referendum in March 1968, Maldivians abolished the sultanate and established a republic. The Second Republic was proclaimed in November 1968 under the presidency of Ibrahim Nasir, who had increasingly dominated the political scene. Under the new constitution, Nasir was elected indirectly to a four-year presidential term by the Majlis (legislature). He appointed Ahmed Zaki as the new prime minister. In 1973 Nasir was elected to a second term under the constitution as amended in 1972, which extended the presidential term to five years and which also provided for the election of the prime minister by the Majlis. In March 1975, newly elected prime minister Zaki was arrested in a bloodless coup and was banished to a remote atoll. Observers suggested that Zaki was

becoming too popular and hence posed a threat to the Nasir faction.

During the 1970s, the economic situation in Maldives suffered a setback when the Sri Lankan market for Maldives' main export of dried fish collapsed. Adding to the problems was the British decision in 1975 to close its airfield on Gan in line with its new policy of abandoning defense commitments east of the Suez Canal. A steep commercial decline followed the evacuation of Gan in March 1976. As a result, the popularity of Nasir's government suffered. Maldives's twenty-year period of authoritarian rule under Nasir abruptly ended in 1978 when he fled to Singapore. A subsequent investigation revealed that he had absconded with millions of dollars from the state treasury.

Elected to replace Nasir for a five-year presidential term in 1978 was Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, a former university lecturer and Maldivian ambassador to the United Nations (UN). The peaceful election was seen as ushering in a period of political stability and economic development in view of Gayoom's priority to develop the poorer islands. In 1978 Maldives joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary) and the World Bank (see Glossary). Tourism also gained in importance to the local economy, reaching more than 120,000 visitors in 1985. The local populace appeared to benefit from increased tourism and the corresponding increase in foreign contacts involving various development projects. Despite coup attempts in 1980, 1983, and 1988, Gayoom's popularity remained strong, allowing him to win three more presidential terms. In the 1983, 1988, and 1993 elections, Gayoom received more than 95 percent of the vote. Although the government did not allow any legal opposition, Gayoom was opposed in the early 1990s by Islamists (also seen as fundamentalists) who wanted to impose a more traditional way of life and by some powerful local business leaders.

Whereas the 1980 and 1983 coup attempts against Gayoom's presidency were not considered serious, the third coup attempt in November 1988 alarmed the international community. About eighty armed Tamil mercenaries landed on Male before dawn aboard speedboats from a freighter. Disguised as visitors, a similar number had already infiltrated Male earlier. Although the mercenaries quickly gained the nearby airport on Hulele, they failed to capture President Gayoom, who fled from house to house and asked for military intervention from India, the United States, and Britain. Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi

immediately dispatched 1,600 troops by air to restore order in Male. Less than twelve hours later, Indian paratroopers arrived on Hulele, causing some of the mercenaries to flee toward Sri Lanka in their freighter. Those unable to reach the ship in time were quickly rounded up. Nineteen people reportedly died in the fighting, and several taken hostage also died. Three days later, an Indian frigate captured the mercenaries on their freighter near the Sri Lankan coast. In July 1989, a number of the mercenaries were returned to Maldives to stand trial. Gayoom commuted the death sentences passed against them to life imprisonment.

The 1988 coup had been headed by a once prominent Maldivian businessperson named Abdullah Luthufi, who was operating a farm on Sri Lanka. Ex-president Nasir denied any involvement in the coup. In fact, in July 1990 President Gayoom officially pardoned Nasir in absentia in recognition of his role in obtaining Maldives' independence.

Physical Environment

Physiography

Maldives consists of approximately 1,200 coral islands grouped in a double chain of twenty-seven atolls. Composed of live coral reefs and sand bars, these atolls are situated atop a submarine ridge 960 kilometers long that rises abruptly from the depths of the Indian Ocean and runs from north to south. Only near the southern end of this natural coral barricade do two open passages permit safe ship navigation from one side of the Indian Ocean to the other through the territorial waters of Maldives. For administrative purposes, the Maldives government organized these atolls into nineteen administrative divisions (see fig. 8; Government and Politics, this ch.).

Most atolls consist of a large, ring-shaped coral reef supporting numerous small islands. Islands average only one to two square kilometers in area, and lie between one and 1.5 meters above mean sea level. The highest island is situated at three meters above sea level. Maldives has no hills or rivers. Although some larger atolls are approximately fifty kilometers long from north to south, and thirty kilometers wide from east to west, no individual island is longer than eight kilometers.

Each atoll has approximately five to ten inhabited islands; the uninhabited islands of each atoll number approximately twenty to sixty. Several atolls, however, consist of one large, iso-

lated island surrounded by a steep coral beach. The most notable example of this type of atoll is the large island of Fua Mulaku situated in the middle of the Equatorial Channel.

The tropical vegetation of Maldives comprises groves of breadfruit trees and coconut palms towering above dense scrub, shrubs, and flowers. The soil is sandy and highly alkaline, and a deficiency in nitrogen, potash, and iron severely limits agricultural potential. Ten percent of the land, or about 2,600 hectares, is cultivated with taro, bananas, coconuts, and other fruit. Only the lush island of Fua Mulaku produces fruits such as oranges and pineapples, partly because the terrain of Fua Mulaku is higher than most other islands, leaving the groundwater less subject to seawater penetration. Freshwater floats in a layer, or "lens," above the seawater that permeates the limestone and coral sands of the islands. These lenses are shrinking rapidly on Male and on many islands where there are resorts catering to foreign tourists. Mango trees already have been reported dying on Male because of salt penetration. Most residents of the atolls depend on groundwater or rainwater for drinking purposes. Concerns over global warming and a possible long-term rise in sea level as a result of the melting of polar ice are important issues to the fragile balance between the people and the environment of Maldives in the 1990s.

Climate

The temperature of Maldives ranges between 24°C and 33°C throughout the year. Although the humidity is relatively high, the constant sea breezes help to keep the air moving. Two seasons dominate Maldives' weather: the dry season associated with the winter northeast monsoon and the rainy season brought by the summer southwest monsoon. The annual rainfall averages 2,540 millimeters in the north and 3,810 millimeters in the south.

The weather in Maldives is affected by the large landmass of the Indian subcontinent to the north. The presence of this landmass causes differential heating of land and water. Scientists also cite other factors in the formation of monsoons, including the barrier of the Himalayas on the northern fringe of the Indian subcontinent and the sun's northward tilt, which shifts the jet stream north. These factors set off a rush of moisture-rich air from the Indian Ocean over the subcontinent, resulting in the southwest monsoon. The hot air that rises over the subcontinent during April and May creates low-pressure

areas into which the cooler, moisture-bearing winds from the Indian Ocean flow. In Maldives, the wet southwest monsoon lasts from the end of April to the end of October and brings the worst weather with strong winds and storms. In May 1991, violent monsoon winds created tidal waves that damaged thousands of houses and piers, flooded arable land with seawater, and uprooted thousands of fruit trees. The damage caused was estimated at US$30 million.

The shift from the moist southwest monsoon to the dry northeast monsoon over the Indian subcontinent occurs during October and November. During this period, the northeast winds contribute to the formation of the northeast monsoon, which reaches Maldives in the beginning of December and lasts until the end of March. However, the weather patterns of Maldives do not always conform to the monsoon patterns of the Indian subcontinent. Rain showers over the whole country have been known to persist for up to one week during the midst of the dry season.

Society

Population

Based on the 1990 census, the population was 213,215. The country's population in mid-1994 was estimated at 252,077. The high 1994 birthrate of 44 per 1,000 will lead to a population of more than 300,000 by the year 2000 and 400,000 by 2020. Although the high population growth rate is a serious problem, Maldives lacks an official birth control policy. The population growth rate also poses problems for the country's future food supply because the dietary staple of rice is not grown in the islands and must be imported.

The largest concentration of Maldives' population is in Male, a small island of approximately two square kilometers, whose 1990 population of 55,130 represented slightly more than 25 percent of the national total. Giving meaningful average population density is difficult because many of Maldives' approximately 1,200 islands are uninhabited. Of the approximately 200 inhabited islands in 1988, twenty-eight had fewer than 200 inhabitants, 107 had populations ranging from 200 to 500, and eight had populations between 500 and 1,000. A government study in the mid-1980s listed twenty-five places with a population of more than 1,000. Maldives has few towns besides the capital of Male. Villages comprise most of the settlements

on the inhabited islands. The 1990 census recorded an average population density for Maldives of 706 persons per square kilometer.

The first accurate census was held in December 1977 and showed 142,832 persons residing in Maldives, an increase of 37 percent over a 1967 estimate. The next census in March 1985 showed 181,453 persons, consisting of 94,060 males and 87,393 females. This pattern has continued in Maldives, with the 1990 census listing 109,806 males and 103,409 females.

Despite rapid population growth, family planning programs in Maldives did not begin in a well-funded and planned manner until the UN implemented several programs in the 1980s. These programs focused on improving health standards among the islanders, including family planning education emphasizing the spacing of births and raising the customary age of marriage among adolescents. Abortion is not a legally accepted method for child spacing in Maldives. In the mid-1980s, a World Health Organization (WHO) program monitored the extent and use of various contraceptive methods over a four-year period. As of the early 1990s, the government had taken no overt actions toward limiting the number of children per couple or setting target population goals.

Ethnic Groups and Language

The contemporary homogeneous mixture of Sinhalese, Dravidian, Arab, Australasian, and African ethnicity in Maldives results from historical changes in regional hegemony over marine trade routes. Clarence Maloney, an anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in Maldives in the 1970s, determined that an early Dravidian-speaking substratum of population from Kerala in India had settled in the islands, leaving its legacy in the language and place-names. This group was subsequently displaced by Dhivehi-speakers who arrived from Sri Lanka and whose language became the official one. Arabs compose the last main group to arrive beginning in the ninth century. However, a rapidly disappearing endogamous subgroup of persons of African origin called the Ravare or Giraavaru also existed. In 1970, facing the loss of their home island in Male Atoll because of erosion, the Ravare moved to Hulele. But a few years later, the community of 200 people was transferred to Male to permit the expansion of the airport on Hulele.

The only distinct ethnic minority is found in Male among the trading community of Indians, who settled there in the

1800s. Several hundred in number, they are also a religious minority, belonging to the Shia (see Glossary) branch of Islam. In addition, a small number of Sri Lankans have come to Maldives in recent years to work in the tourist resorts because Maldivians, as devout Muslims, refuse to work in facilities serving alcoholic beverages. This situation has created some resentment on the part of local Maldivians facing unemployment.

The language Maldivian Dhivehi belongs to the Indo-European language family. Derived from Elu, an archaic form of Sinhalese (the language of Sri Lanka), it has numerous loanwords from Arabic, from Hindi—which is used in trade with Indian merchants—and from Tamil. It has contributed one word, "atoll," to international usage. In Dhivehi, the numbers from one to twelve are of Sinhalese origin, and after twelve, Hindi. The names of the days are Sinhalese and Hindi. The names of persons are Arabic.

Dhivehi is spoken throughout the atolls. Dialect differences are pronounced in the four southernmost atolls, however. The traditional script, Thaana, is written from right to left. This locally invented script contains twenty-four letters, the first nine of which are forms of the Arabic numerals. In 1977 a romanized script was introduced to be used along with Thaana for official correspondence, but since 1979 the requirement is no longer mandatory.

Social Structure

Maldives was a caste society well into the 1920s. Modernization efforts, however, have helped make Maldives more homogeneous in the early 1990s. Traditionally, a significant gap has existed between the elite living on Male and the remainder of the population inhabiting the outer islands—those atolls distant from Male. President Gayoom's development philosophy has centered on decreasing this gap by raising the standard of living among the 75 percent of Maldivians who live in the outer atolls as well as making Maldives more self-sufficient. Fortunately, social tensions that might have affected these two distinct societies were lessened by the isolation of the outer islands. The geographical advantage of having many islands, for example, has enabled Maldives to limit the impact of tourism to special resorts.

Male, the traditional seat of the sultans and of the nobility, remains an elite society wielding political and economic power. Members of the several traditionally privileged ruling families;

government, business, and religious leaders; professionals; and scholars are found there. Male differs from other island communities also because as many as 40 percent of its residents are migrants.

The island communities outside Male are in most cases self-contained economic units, drawing meager sustenance from the sea around them. Islanders are in many instances interrelated by marriage and form a small, tightly knit group whose main economic pursuit is fishing. Apart from the heads of individual households, local influence is exerted by the government appointed island *khatib*, or chief. Regional control over each atoll is administered by the *atolu verin*, or atoll chief, and by the *gazi*, or community religious leader. Boat owners, as employers, also dominate the local economy and, in many cases, provide an informal, but effective, link to Male's power structure.

The family is the basic unit of society. Roughly 80 percent of Maldivian households consist of a single nuclear family composed of a married couple and their children rather than an extended family. Typically, unmarried adults remain with relatives instead of living alone or with strangers. The man is usually the head of the family household, and descent is patrilineal. Women do not accept their husbands' names after marriage but maintain their maiden names. Inheritance of property is through both males and females.

As Muslims, men may have as many as four wives, but there is little evidence to suggest that many have more than one. Islamic law, as practiced in Maldives, makes divorce easy for men and women. Divorce rates are among the highest in the world. According to the 1977 census, nearly half the women over the age of thirty had been married four times or more. Half of all women marry by the age of fifteen. About 60 percent of men marry at age twenty or later.

The status of women has traditionally been fairly high, as attested to in part by the existence of four sultanas. Women do not veil, nor are they strictly secluded, but special sections are reserved for women in public places, such as stadiums and mosques.

Religion

With the exception of Shia members of the Indian trading community, Maldivians are Sunni Muslims; adherence to Islam, the state religion since the twelfth century, is required for citi-

zenship. The importance of Islam in Maldives is further evident in the lack of a secular legal system. Instead, the traditional Islamic law code of sharia, known in Dhivehi as *sariatu*, forms the basic law code of Maldives as interpreted to conform to local Maldivian conditions by the president, the attorney general, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Majlis. On the inhabited islands, the *miski*, or mosque, forms the central place where Islam is practiced. Because Friday is the most important day for Muslims to attend mosque, shops and offices in towns and villages close around 11 a.m., and the sermon begins by 12:30 p.m. Most inhabited islands have several mosques; Male has more than thirty. Most mosques are whitewashed buildings constructed of coral stone with corrugated iron or thatched roofs. In Male, the Islamic Center and the Grand Friday Mosque, built in 1984 with funding from the Persian Gulf states, Pakistan, Brunei, and Malaysia, are imposing elegant structures. The gold-colored dome of this mosque is the first structure sighted when approaching Male. In mid-1991 Maldives had a total of 724 mosques and 266 women's mosques.

Prayer sessions are held five times daily. *Mudimu*, the mosque caretakers, make the call, but tape recordings rather than the human voice are often used. Most shops and offices close for fifteen minutes after each call. During the ninth Muslim month of Ramadan, Muslims fast during the daylight hours. Therefore, cafés and restaurants are closed during the day, and working hours are limited. The exact occurrence of Ramadan varies each year because it depends on the lunar cycle. Ramadan begins with the new moon and ends with the sighting of the next new moon.

The isolation of Maldives from the historical centers of Islam in the Middle East and Asia has allowed some pre-Islamic beliefs and attitudes to survive. Western anthropologist Maloney during his 1970s fieldwork in Maldives reports being told by a Muslim cleric that for most Maldivians Islam is "largely a matter of observing ablutions, fasting, and reciting incomprehensible Arabic prayer formulas." There is a widespread belief in jinns, or evil spirits. For protection against such evils, people often resort to various charms and spells. The extent of these beliefs has led some observers to identify a magico-religious system parallel to Islam known as *fandita*, which provides a more personal way for the islanders to deal with either actual or perceived problems in their lives.

Education

Only primary and secondary education, neither of which is compulsory, is offered in Maldives. Students seeking higher education must go abroad to a university. Maldives has three types of schools: Quranic schools, private Dhivehi-language primary schools, and English-language primary and secondary schools. Schools in the last category are government-supported and are the only ones equipped to teach the standard curriculum. In 1992 approximately 20 percent of government revenues went to finance education, a significant increase over the 1982 expenditure of 8.5 percent. Part of the reason for this large expenditure results from recent increases in the construction of modern school facilities on many of the islands. In the late 1970s, faced with a great disparity between the quality of schooling offered in the islands and in Male, the government undertook an ambitious project to build one modern primary school in each of the nineteen administrative atolls. The government in Male directly controls the administration of these primary schools. Literacy is reportedly high; the claimed 1991 adult literacy rate of 98.2 percent would give Maldives the highest rate in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

In Maldives primary education comprises classes one through five, enrolling students in the corresponding ages six through ten. Secondary education is divided between classes six through ten, which represent overall secondary education, and classes eleven and twelve, which constitute higher secondary education. In 1992 Maldives had a total of 73,642 pupils in school: 32,475 in government schools and 41,167 in private schools.

Traditionally, education was the responsibility of religious leaders and institutions. Most learning centered on individual tutorials in religious teachings. In 1924 the first formal schools opened in Male. These schools were call *edhuruge*, and served as Quranic schools. *Edhuruge* were only established on two other islands at this time. The basic Quranic primary school on the islands in the 1990s is the *makthab*, dating from the 1940s. Quranic primary schools of a slightly larger scale, in terms of curriculum, enrollment, and number of teachers, are called *madhrasaa*. During the 1940s, a widespread government campaign was organized to bring formal schooling to as many of the inhabited islands as possible. Enthusiastically supported by the islanders, who contributed a daily allotment of the fish catch to support the schools, many one-room structures of

coral and lime with thatched roofs were constructed. The *makthab* assumed the functions of the traditional *edhuruge* while also providing a basic curriculum in reading, writing, and arithmetic. But with the death of reformist president Didi and the restoration of the sultanate in the early 1950s, official interest in the development of education in the atolls waned.

Throughout the 1960s, attention to education focused mainly on the two government schools in Male. In 1960 the medium of instruction changed from Dhivehi to English, and the curriculum was reorganized according to the imported London General Certificate of Education. In the early 1990s, secondary education was available only in Male's English-medium schools, which also had preschool and primary-level offerings.

As of the early 1990s, education for the majority of Maldivian children continues to be provided by the *makthab*. In 1989 there were 211 community and private schools, and only fifty government schools. The results of a UN study of school enrollment in 1983 showed that the total number in the new government primary schools on the atolls was only 7,916, compared with 23,449 in private schools. In Male the number of students attending government schools was 5,892, with 5,341 in private schools. Throughout the 1980s, enrollment continued to rise as more government-sponsored schools were constructed in the atolls. In 1992 the first secondary school outside Male opened on Addu Atoll.

In 1975 the government, with international assistance, started vocational training at the Vocational Training Center in Male. The training covered electricity, engine repair and maintenance, machinery, welding, and refrigeration. Trainees were chosen from among fourth- and fifth-grade students. In the atolls, the Rural Youth Vocational Training Program provided training designed to meet local needs in engine repair and maintenance, tailoring, carpentry, and boat building. On the island of Mafuri in Male Atoll, a large juvenile reformatory also offered vocational training. Established by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1979, the reformatory provided training courses in electrical and mechanical engineering, carpentry, welding, and tailoring, as well as a limited primary school academic curriculum.

International organizations enabled the creation of the Science Education Center in 1979, and an Arabic Islamic Education Center opened in 1989. Japanese aid enabled the

founding of the Maldives Center for Social Education in 1991. In the latter half of 1993 work began on the Maldives Institute of Technical Education to help eliminate the shortage of skilled labor.

Health

Health Conditions

Life expectancy at birth in Maldives in 1994 was 63.2 years for males, 66.1 for females, and 64.7 overall. The death rate was estimated at seven per 1,000 in 1994. Infant mortality was estimated at 53.8 per 1,000 live births in 1994, a dramatic decrease from the rate of 120 per 1,000 in the 1970s. Nutrition is an important factor affecting health. In the 1980s, the daily average intake of calories was estimated at 1,781.

Waterborne and tropical communicable diseases are prevalent as the result of an inadequate drinking water supply. In Maldives the freshwater table is shallow and easily contaminated by organic and human waste. To combat these problems, the Male Water Supply and Sewerage Project was launched in 1985. Its completion in 1988 allowed sewer pipes to collect sewage for pumping into the sea. However, in the outer islands no such sewerage systems exist. The government has promoted the construction of ferro-cement rainwater tanks in recent years to help ensure safe drinking water in the outer islands. Major diseases include gastroenteritis, typhoid, and cholera. Malaria, tuberculosis, filariasis, eye infections, poliomyelitis, venereal diseases, and leprosy are also reported. Since the late 1970s, a number of disease-eradication projects have been organized with assistance from the World Health Organization.

Health Care

In Maldives the Ministry of Health is responsible for the delivery of health services. Despite government efforts, a major constraint facing the health sector in the early 1990s is a shortage of skilled personnel and health facilities. The WHO reported in 1989 that the population per physician was 7,723. However, when the ratio for Male was separated from that for the atolls, the acute shortage of physicians for the majority of Maldivians became even more obvious. Whereas the population per doctor in Male in 1989 was 2,673, in the atolls it was 35,498. These ratios were derived from a 1989 total of sixteen

physicians: twelve in Male and four in the atolls. Also, in 1989 the only dentist was located in Male.

Maldives' medical establishment in the early 1990s consisted of the Male Central Hospital, four regional hospitals, two in the north and two in the south, and twenty-one primary health care centers. The Central Hospital maintains ninety-five beds, and the four regional hospitals have a combined total of sixty-one beds. In 1992 thirty physicians and seventeen medical specialists worked in the Central Hospital. Furthermore, the government opened the Institute for Health Sciences in 1992, and the 200-bed Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital was scheduled to open in 1994.

Each administrative atoll has at least one health center staffed by community health workers. Most of the inhabited islands also have traditional medical practitioners. However, it was reported in the early 1990s that the atoll hospitals and health centers could only treat minor illnesses. Routine operations could be performed only in Male Central Hospital, which had Russian physicians.

To provide better health facilities in the outer islands, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in collaboration with the Maldives government, outfitted two boats to be used by mobile health teams. In 1985 two mobile health teams were dispatched from Male, one to the north and one to the south. Each team included a primary health care worker, a nurse, a family health worker, a malaria fieldworker, three community health workers, and a government official. The services they provided included immunization, communicable disease control, family health, nutrition, and health education. In the late 1980s, a third team was added.

Economy

Gross Domestic Product

In the early 1990s, Maldives was ranked by the UN as one of the world's twenty-nine least developed countries. The World Bank estimated Maldives' gross national product (GNP—see Glossary) in 1991 at US$101 million and its per capita income at US$460. The 1993 estimated real growth rate was 6 percent. Between 1980 and 1991, GNP was estimated to increase at an average annual rate of 10.2 percent.

President Gayoom's development philosophy centers on increasing Maldives' self-sufficiency and improving the stan-

dard of living of residents of the outer islands. In 1994 a considerable gap continued to exist between the general prosperity of the inhabitants of Male and the limited resources and comparative isolation of those living on the outer islands. The Third National Development Plan (1991–93) reflected these objectives and aimed to improve overall living standards, to reduce the imbalance in population density and socioeconomic progress between Male and the atolls, and to achieve greater self-sufficiency for purposes of future growth.

The fishing and tourist industries are the main contributors to the gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary). In 1992 the fishing industry provided approximately 15 percent of total GDP. Revenues from tourism were comparable to 80 percent of visible export receipts in 1992, contributing approximately 17 percent of GDP. The country had no known mineral resources, and its cropland—small and scattered over the approximately 200 inhabited islands—was inadequate to sustain a burgeoning population. Agriculture employed a little more than 7 percent of the labor force in 1990 in the limited production of coconuts, cassava, taro, corn, sweet potatoes, and fruit, and accounted for almost 10 percent of GDP. These basic foodstuffs represented only 10 percent of domestic food needs, with the remainder being imported.

Fishing

Formerly, Maldives shipped 90 percent of its fishing catch of tuna in dried form to Sri Lanka. However, because Sri Lanka cut back its imports of such fish, in 1979 Maldives joined with the Japanese Marubeni Corporation to form the Maldives Nippon Corporation that canned and processed fresh fish. Also in 1979 the Maldivian government created the Maldives Fisheries Corporation to exploit fisheries resources.

Maldives has an extensive fishing fleet of boats built domestically of coconut wood, each of which can carry about twelve persons. In 1991 there were 1,258 such pole and line fishing boats and 352 trawlers. Based on a US$3.2 million loan from the International Development Association (IDA—see Glossary), most of the boats have been mechanized in the course of the 1980s. Although the addition of motors has increased fuel costs, it has resulted in doubling the fishing catch between 1982 and 1985. Moreover, the 1992 catch of 82,000 tons set a record—for example, in 1987 the catch was 56,900 tons.

Progress has also been made as a result of fisheries development projects undertaken by the World Bank. Harbor and refrigeration facilities have been improved, leading to a fourfold increase in earnings from canned fish between 1983 and 1985. Further construction of fisheries refrigeration installations and related facilities such as collector vessels were underway in 1994, with funding both from Japan and the World Bank.

Tourism

Because of its clear waters, distinctive corals, and sandy white beaches, Maldives has many features to attract tourists. As a result, tourism by 1989 had become the country's major source of foreign exchange, surpassing fishing. In 1992 tourism income constituted 17 percent of GDP. Furthermore, tourism is expected to increase as the government infrastructure improvement projects in the areas of transportation, communications, sanitation, water supply, and other support facilities are put into place.

Since the 1970s, approximately fifty resorts, mostly consisting of thatched bungalows, have been built on many uninhabited islands on Male Atoll. In 1990 a dozen new resorts were under construction on Maldives. In the following year, 196,112 tourists visited Maldives, primarily from Germany, Italy, Britain, and Japan in that order.

Tourist facilities have been developed by private companies and in 1991 consisted of sixty-eight "island resorts" with nearly 8,000 hotel beds. Tourists are not allowed to stay on Male so as not to affect adversely the Muslim life-style of the indigenous people. Wilingili Island has also been off limits for tourist accommodation since 1990 to allow for population overflow from Male to settle there.

Currency and Banking

The Maldivian unit of currency is the rufiyaa (Rf—see Glossary). Introduced in 1981, the rufiyaa replaced the Maldivian rupee. The rufiyaa is divided into 100 laari. The January 1994 dollar exchange rate was US$1 = Rf11.1 rufiyaa. The rufiyaa has been steadily declining in value against the dollar. The 1993 estimated inflation rate in consumer prices was 15 percent.

Established in 1981, the Maldives Monetary Authority was the nation's first central bank. In 1974 the first bank estab-

The sandy beaches of Maldives make tourism a major source of income. Courtesy Gloria Garcia

lished in Maldives was a branch of the State Bank of India. A branch of the Habib Bank of Pakistan was established in 1976, and the Bank of Ceylon also opened two branches. The first commercial bank established in Maldives was the Bank of Maldives, Limited. It opened in 1982 as a joint venture between the government and the International Finance Investment and Credit Bank of Bangladesh; by 1993 it was 100 percent state-owned.

Budget

The fiscal system in Maldives has been described as rudimentary; the country has no income tax. Tax revenues are derived from customs duties, a tourist/airport tax, and property taxes. Major sources of nontax revenues are derived from the State Trading Organization, rentals of islands to tourist resorts, and boat licensing fees.

Maldives has experienced a budget deficit since the 1980s, when more accurate accounting data became available. Government revenues in 1984 totaled Rf205.4 million. In 1992 government revenues rose to Rf1.02 billion, whereas expenditures totaled Rf1.5 billion. Of these expenditures, education received Rf223 million, atoll development projects Rf362 million, security Rf117 million, and health Rf111 million.

Employment

In 1992 the fishing industry employed about 22 percent of the labor force, making it the largest single source of employment in Maldives. However, a high level of disguised unemployment existed on a seasonal basis as a result of climatic conditions.

Despite its importance as a source of government revenue, tourism provides few meaningful employment opportunities to Maldivians. Tourism accounts for only about 6 percent of the country's labor force. Because most Maldivians have no education beyond primary school, most lack the required knowledge of foreign languages to cater to foreign tourists. As a result, non-Maldivians fill most of the best jobs in the tourist industry. Indigenous employment on the resort islands is also discouraged by the government's efforts to limit contact between Maldivians and Westerners to prevent adverse influence on local Islamic mores. Also, the low season for tourists, the time for rainy monsoons from late April to late October, coincides with the low season for the fishing industry.

After fishing, the largest source of employment is in the industrial sector, including mining, manufacturing, power, and construction. Although this sector also accounted for nearly 22 percent of the labor force in 1990, most employment was in traditional small-scale cottage industries. Women are mainly employed in these activities, such as coir rope making from coconut husks, *cadjan* or thatch weaving from dried coconut palm leaves, and mat weaving from indigenous reeds. The ancient task of cowrie-shell collecting for export is another occupation in which only women participate. In the early 1990s, a small number of modern industries were operating, mostly fish canning and garment making.The largest garment factories are Hong Kong-owned and occupy abandoned hangars and other maintenance buildings at the former British air station on Gan. They employ about 1,500 local women who are bused in and about 500 young Sri Lankan women who reside at the site working the nightshift.

Other forms of employment in 1990 were minor. Government administration accounted for about 7 percent of workers; transportation and communications, 5 percent; trade, 3 percent; and mining of coral, 1 percent.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Maldives has two airports with permanent-surface runways more than 2,440 meters long, one located adjacent to Male on Hulele Island, known as Male International Airport, and the other on Gan Island in the southernmost Addu Atoll, which is scheduled to become an international airport. Since 1981, after the runway was widened and expanded, the airport on Hulele has been able to handle direct charter flights from Europe. The airport on Gan is used only for domestic traffic. Two additional domestic airports cater to foreign tourists. One on Kadu Island in Haddummati Atoll opened in 1986, and the other on Hanimadu Island in South Tiladummati Atoll opened in 1990. A further domestic airport on Kodedu Island was scheduled to open in 1994.

In 1974 the government created Air Maldives, which had one eighteen-seat airplane. In the early 1990s, Air Maldives flew between Hulele and Gan three days a week, and between Hulele and Kadu twice a week. A twenty-seat seaplane operated by Inter Atoll Air also flew scheduled and chartered flights between Hulele and many of the resorts. In addition, Hummingbird Helicopters (Maldives) and Seagull Airways each

operated four helicopters for interisland flights. Another firm, Maldives Air Services, coordinated all air services on the ground.

Maldives has an active merchant shipping fleet used for import and export purposes, including ten cargo vessels, one container ship, and one oil tanker. The government-owned Maldives National Ship Management, Limited, is the largest of several Maldivian shipping firms.

Male, the only port that can handle international traffic, has been improved by the First Male Port Development Project completed in late 1992. The Second Male Port Development Project, partly financed by a loan from the Asian Development Bank, began in late 1993 and is scheduled for completion in 1996.

The fishing *dhoni* is the traditional all-purpose vessel in Maldives. Although *dhonis* have sails, most are also engine-powered. *Dhonis* are used mainly within the sheltered waters of each atoll. Travel through the open sea from one atoll to another is usually by *vedis*, larger, square-shaped wooden cargo boats.

The primary form of road traffic in Maldives is the bicycle. Motorcycles are the most common form of motor vehicle, of which 4,126 were registered in 1992. Passenger cars on Male are primarily status symbols for the Maldivian elite; however, the larger inhabited islands and resort islands have limited taxi services for transporting people to and from wharves and airfields. In 1992 there were 691 registered passenger cars, and 379 trucks and tractors.

Modern communications are minimal in Maldives. Most people use citizen-band radios on the islands and in boats (see Media, this ch.). Telephone service between Male and the islands is limited. However, most of the resort islands can be contacted directly by telephone, and administrative atoll offices are linked both to Male and to each other by radio-telephone. Modernization efforts of the government have resulted in a steady increase in the number of telephones. The 1984 number of 1,060 telephones increased in 1992 to 8,523. There is good international telephone service through a satellite ground station in Male.

Trade

Based on IMF reports, Maldives's trade deficit increased to US$110.5 million in 1992 from US$82.6 million in 1991. The

current account deficit also increased to US$33.2 million in 1992 from US$9.0 million in 1991. Principal food commodities imported were rice, wheat flour, and sugar. The main imported manufactured goods were petroleum products and various consumer goods. Imports in 1991 came primarily from India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Britain in that order.

Principal exports consisted of frozen, dried, and salted skipjack tuna; canned fish; dried sharkfins; and fish meal. Maldives also exported apparel and clothing accessories from its small manufacturing sector. Exports were destined mainly to Britain, the United States, and Sri Lanka in descending order.

Economic Aid

Before the 1980s, Maldives received limited assistance from certain UN specialized agencies. Much of the external help came from Arab oil-producing states, notably Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, for use on an ad hoc basis rather than as part of comprehensive development planning. With local impetus in the 1980s from the developmental commitment of the Gayoom presidency to raise the standard of living in the outer islands, Maldives received an annual average of US$15.5 million in external assistance in the form of grants and loans. For example, in 1988 bilateral donors accounted for approximately 73 percent of disbursements; the UN, 20 percent; other multilateral sources, 5 percent; and nongovernmental organizations, about 2 percent.

Foreign aid in 1992 was approximately US$11.6 million and came from international agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and individual countries, particularly Japan—in 1991 Japan was Maldives's largest aid donor. Other than humanitarian aid, loans and grants went for such purposes as education, health, transportation, fisheries, and harbor development. As a result of the severe damage caused by the 1991 monsoon, Maldives received relief aid from India, Pakistan, the United States, and a number of other countries.

Government and Politics

Constitution

Government organization is based on the 1968 constitution, as revised in 1970, 1972, and 1975. The document provides the basis for a highly centralized, presidential form of government. Its philosophical frame of reference is derived from Islam; thus

the distinction between secular and religious authority is often academic. The constitution vests final authority for the propagation of Islam in the president, who in turn is empowered to appoint all judges who interpret and apply the sharia in the adjudication of civil and criminal cases. In Maldives, therefore, the courts are not independent of the executive branch, but rather are under the minister of justice, who is appointed by the president.

Constitutional provisions regarding the basic rights of the people are broadly phrased. They refer to freedom of speech and assembly, equality before the law, and the right to own property, but these rights are to be exercised within the framework of the sharia. In 1990 younger members of the recently expanded president's Consultative Council called for the repeal or amendment of Article 38 in the penal code, which allows the jailing or banishment "for any gesture, speech or action that instills malice or disobedience in the minds of Maldivians against lawfully formed government."

The president is elected for a renewable five-year term by the Majlis, or legislature. The election must be formalized through confirmation in a popular referendum. The chief executive is assisted by a cabinet, or Council of Ministers, whose members serve at his pleasure. The post of prime minister, which had existed under the sultan and in the early years of the republic, was eliminated in 1975 by President Ibrahim Nasir because of abuses of the office. Cabinet ministers need not be members of the Majlis. The legislature is unicameral, with members elected for five-year terms by citizens aged twenty-one and above, or appointed by the president. Eight of its forty-eight members are appointed by the president, and the rest are chosen popularly, two from Male and two from each of the nineteen administrative atolls.

Politics

The presidential and Majlis elections are held on a nonpartisan basis because there are no organized political parties in the country. Candidates run as independents on the basis of personal qualifications.

Although in 1994 Maldives had no organized political competition in the Western sense, partisan conflict occurred behind the scenes. Battles were intensely fought on the basis of factional or personal alliances among elite circles. For more than twenty years, until late 1978, the dominant faction had

been led by former President Nasir, who ran the government with a firm hand and who seldom appeared in public. His sudden departure from Maldives, subsequently revealed as connected with malfeasance, ended a political era.

Transition was smooth under the new leadership group presided over by Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, a former cabinet member and diplomat who took office on November 11, 1978, after a peaceful election. The new president pledged to administer the country in a fair and more open manner by restoring civil rights, by establishing rapport at the grass-roots level, and by remedying the long neglect of popular welfare in the outer islands. However, criticism of alleged nepotism and corruption has continued through the 1980s and early 1990s.

Gayoom's presidential cabinet, including his relatives in key positions, is considered a "kitchen cabinet" of traditional power holders that exert a strong influence against democratic reforms on a weak but relatively popular president. Events in the spring of 1990 tended to confirm that Gayoom's announced support for democratic reform was not being honored throughout the governmental power structure. In April, three pro-reform members of the Majlis received anonymous death threats. A few months later, all publications not sanctioned by the government were banned, and some leading writers and publishers were arrested. These actions followed the emergence of several politically outspoken magazines, including *Sangu* (Conch Shell). The circulation of this magazine increased from 500 in February 1990 to 3,000 in April.

Gayoom reshuffled the cabinet in May 1990, dismissing his brother-in-law, Ilyas Ibrahim, as minister of state for defense and national security. Ibrahim had left the country suddenly, apparently before being called to account for embezzlement and misappropriation of funds. Gayoom placed him under house arrest when he returned in August 1990. He was cleared by an investigatory commission in March 1991 and appointed minister of atolls' administration. In April 1991, President Gayoom established a board to investigate charges of malfeasance against government officials. As a result of Gayoom's increasing assertion of his power in the early 1990s, by 1992 he had assumed the duties of both minister of defense and minister of finance, posts he still held in August 1994 as well as that of governor of the Maldives Monetary Authority. Gayoom was reelected to a fourth five-year term as president in national elections in 1993. His principal rival, Ilyas Ibrahim, was sen-

tenced to fifteen years' banishment after being found guilty of "treason" because of his attempts to win the presidency.

Foreign Relations

Maldives has traditionally sought to maintain a status independent of the great powers while simultaneously preserving cordial relations with all members of the world community. The purposes of this stance are to receive additional aid and to keep the Indian Ocean area at peace. An instance of Maldives' nonalignment was its refusal of a Soviet offer of US$1 million in October 1977 as rental for the former British air base on Gan, which Britain evacuated in 1976. Historically, Maldives has had close relations with Britain, its former colonial power, and has been a full member of the British Commonwealth since 1985.

Maldives participates in a variety of international organizations. It joined the UN in 1965 and the World Bank and the IMF in 1978. In connection with its concern over the security of the Indian Ocean area, Maldives became a founder of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC—see Glossary) in 1985. It has been a member of the Colombo Plan designed to promote economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific since 1963. In 1990 the fifth SAARC annual conference was held in Male. Maldives is also a member of the Asian Development Bank.

Although a Muslim nation, Maldives has remained apart from most of the problems associated with the Islamist (also seen as fundamentalist) movement in the Middle East. Maldives falls within India's sphere of influence and in 1976 signed an agreement demarcating the maritime boundary between the two countries. It has also received military assistance from India, such as the sending of 1,600 military personnel in 1988 at President Gayoom's request to repel a group of invading mercenaries.

Media

The major daily newspaper in Maldives is *Haveeru* (North Side) in Male with a circulation of 2,500. *Aafathis*, another daily in Dhivehi and English, has a circulation of 300. Maldives also has a number of weekly and monthly publications as well as several news agencies and publishers.

Censorship exists in Maldives although on a smaller scale than before President Gayoom took office in 1978. Neverthe-

less, open dissent against the government is not tolerated. For example, in early 1990 the Consultative Council discussed freedom of speech in the press. But when publications critical of the government appeared in the spring of 1990, all publications that lacked government sanction were banned. Also, leading writers and publishers have been arrested.

Hindi-language films, newspapers, and magazines from India are popular. For eleven hours each day, the government radio station Voice of Maldives, established in 1962, broadcasts to the entire country in Dhivehi and English. Maldivians in 1992 had 28,284 radio receivers to pick up such broadcasts. In 1978 government-run Television Maldives was established. During the week, its one channel broadcasts for five hours a day, with an extended weekend service. However, it can only be received (by the 6,591 Maldivians with television sets in 1992) within a thirty-kilometer radius of Male. Maldives also receives broadcasts by the British Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Australia, and Radio Beijing.

Given the censorship that exists, the media play only a limited role in promoting greater democracy. A major question facing Maldives is the way in which democracy will be defined in view of the contrast between a South Asian kinship system and its egalitarian Western-style parliamentary elections.

* * *

The best recent work that provides a wealth of information on Maldives' physical environment is the relevant section of *Maldives and Islands of the East Indian Ocean, A Travel Survival Kit*, by Robert Willox. Additional insight into contemporary travel and ways of life in the outer islands is provided by Thor Heyerdahl in *The Maldive Mystery.*

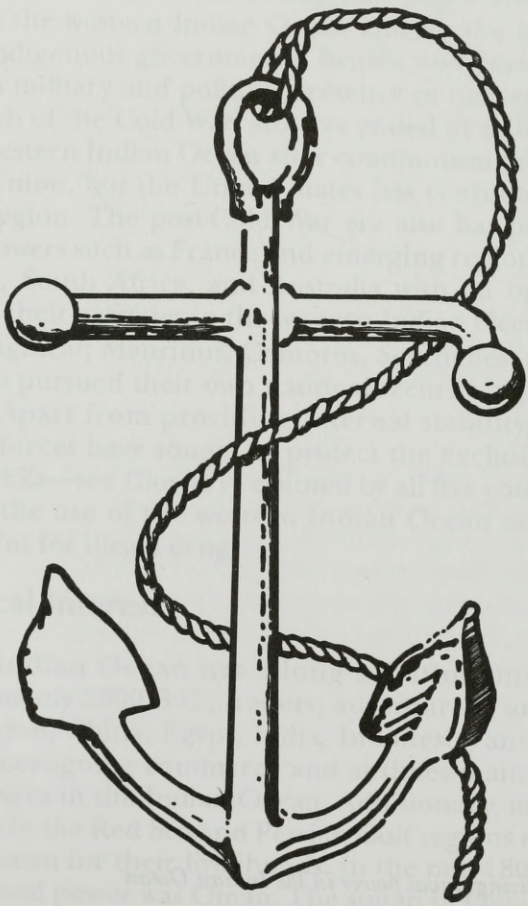
Maldives's history is outlined according to official governmental views in *Maldives: A Historical Overview.* More candid descriptions are provided by both the above-mentioned work by Heyerdahl and Clarence Maloney's *People of the Maldive Islands.* Maloney's work is also an excellent source for information on modern Maldivian society, based as it is on the fieldwork of an anthropologist. Additional sources of information on Maldivian society include the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report *Status of Women: Maldives*, and the official Maldives publication *Maldives: Social Development.* A wealth of contemporary data on all aspects of Maldives's social development can be found in

"Maldives: Physical and Social Geography," in *The Far East and Australasia, 1993.*

The best source for a concise, yet scholarly description of the history and contemporary position of Islam in Maldives may be found in volume six of *The Encyclopedia of Islam.* Both the history and current situation of education in Maldives are detailed in the UNESCO report, *Innovation in Primary School Construction,* by M. Luthfi and H. Zubair. The recent series of reports on health conditions and care in Maldives by the World Health Organization, such as the 1989 *Twenty-Four Monthly Report on Technical Aspects of Programme Implementation,* is an excellent source for the study of health.

The Maldivian economy is outlined in the official *Maldives: An Economic Brief,* and *Maldives: Year Book 1988.* Additional relevant data are contained in the *World Factbook, 1994,* and the Europa *The Far East and Australasia, 1994.* Useful periodicals include the *Indian Ocean Newsletter, Keesing's Contemporary Archives,* and *Africa Research Bulletin.* (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography).

Chapter 6. Strategic Considerations



Anchor, symbolizing naval power in the Indian Ocean

HISTORICALLY, the western Indian Ocean has played a vital role in international politics. In ancient times, maritime commerce attracted numerous nations to the region, including Ceylon (Sri Lanka), China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, and Persia (Iran). During the period of European colonial empires, Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, and France sought to safeguard their respective strategic and commercial interests by protecting the lines of communication and providing external defense and internal security to Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, and Maldives. After 1945 Cold War considerations provoked competition between the United States and the former Soviet Union for access to strategically important air and naval bases in the western Indian Ocean and for the loyalties of the area's indigenous governments. Britain and France also maintained a military and political presence in the region throughout much of the Cold War. Moscow ended its military presence in the western Indian Ocean after communism collapsed in the Soviet Union, but the United States has continued its interest in the region. The post-Cold War era also has provided traditional powers such as France and emerging regional states such as India, South Africa, and Australia with an opportunity to increase their activities in the western Indian Ocean.

Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, and Maldives have also pursued their own national security objectives in the region. Apart from providing internal stability, indigenous security forces have sought to protect the exclusive economic zones (EEZs—see Glossary) claimed by all five countries and to prevent the use of the western Indian Ocean as a transshipment point for illegal drugs.

Historical Interest

The Indian Ocean has a long maritime history. Since approximately 2500 B.C., traders, adventurers, and explorers from Ceylon, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, and Persia conducted oceangoing commerce and at times maintained maritime empires in the Indian Ocean. Additionally, many peoples who lived in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf regions relied on the Indian Ocean for their livelihoods. In the mid-1800s, the most notable local power was Oman. The sultan of Oman moved his

capital from Muscat to Zanzibar in 1841 and established a trading empire along the East African coast based largely on ivory and slaves. In the wake of these activities, Asians began to migrate into the western Indian Ocean. As early as 500 B.C., however, Dravidians and Sinhalese from India and Ceylon had settled in the Maldive Islands. By A.D. 1000, Malayo-Indonesians had established communities in Madagascar.

The emergence of the great European maritime empires marked a historical watershed in the Indian Ocean. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British quickly gained control over much of the region, using sophisticated ships and maritime strategies and exploiting local rivalries to gain allies and territory. These activities signaled the beginning of the use of the Indian Ocean as a theater where European maritime nations competed for power and influence. This rivalry spawned many extraregional wars and alliances, many of which caused instability in the region's islands.

One of the most important personalities during the early European period was Alfonso d'Albuquerque, governor of Portugal's Indian Ocean possessions from 1508 to 1515. Rather than devoting his energies to territorial conquest, he used naval power to control trade routes. D'Albuquerque established a network of bases in the Indian Ocean; constructed forts at the entrances to the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Strait of Malacca; and concluded alliances with economically powerful rulers on the African and Asian coasts. These tactics enabled Portugal to dominate commercial activity in the Indian Ocean from 1511 to 1641.

From the seventeenth century until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Europe and North America relied on the western Indian Ocean and its islands for transporting Eastern goods and spices. As this shorter route quickly supplanted the longer Cape of Good Hope route and steam gradually replaced sail, the region's strategic importance diminished. The islands of Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, and, to a lesser extent, Maldives, all of which had been important way stations for international shipping, became remote colonial outposts.

The Suez Canal enabled Britain to consolidate its hegemony over the Indian Ocean, but it also opened the way for other European nations into the area. The stronger European powers not only challenged British mastery over the Indian Ocean but also began a scramble for colonies. The French established a presence in the Horn of Africa and Madagascar, both of

which protected the route to their Southeast Asia empire. The Italians, Germans, and Portuguese planted colonies along the East African coast. Russia viewed the Suez Canal as a means of creating a network of warm water ports, but Japan's 1904 victory over the Russian fleet ended this dream. Over the next several years, Japan and the United States posed a growing naval challenge to Britain's dominance in the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, British seapower remained preeminent throughout the region.

During World War I, the Indian Ocean aroused international interest as the British and the Germans battled one another for control of various colonies. These nations also sought to protect shipping routes from the Persian Gulf and India, via the Suez Canal, to Europe. Despite the area's importance, Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, and Maldives managed to escape the ravages of World War I.

The western Indian Ocean, especially Madagascar, played a more significant role in World War II. On May 5, 1942, the British defeated pro-Vichy French troops and then occupied Diégo Suarez. This action denied an important naval base to Japan, which undoubtedly would have used the facility to threaten British maritime communications along East Africa with the Middle East. After occupying Majunga, Tamatave, and Tananarive (now Antananarivo), the British established a military administration over Madagascar that functioned until mid-1943. Apart from these activities, German submarines harassed Allied shipping throughout the western Indian Ocean.

The most notable wartime event in the region occurred at the 1942 Battle of the Java Sea. The Japanese destroyed the British Royal Navy elements that participated, marking the end of British hegemony over the Indian Ocean. Nonetheless, in the absence of a strong contending naval power, Britain retained nominal control of sizable portions of the Indian Ocean, even though it lacked the ability and resources to reassert its former maritime dominance. France confined its activities mainly to the western Indian Ocean. Politically, World War II weakened British and French holds over their respective colonial empires. The rising tide of nationalism that swept through Africa and Asia accelerated demands for independence on the part of all the western Indian Ocean islands.

During the postwar period, several factors affected the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. The onset of the Cold War increased superpower activity throughout the region. By

1964 the United States had developed ballistic missile submarines that could hit industrial targets in the Soviet Union from the Arabian Sea. Moscow perceived this as a prelude to a similar buildup in the Indian Ocean. This perception was compounded by Washington's announcement that it intended to deploy some ballistic missile submarines to the Pacific Ocean and to build a very low frequency communications station—designed for submarine contact—in western Australia.

As British power in the region weakened, London and Washington sought ways to uphold the interests of both nations. In 1965 the British government told a Mauritian delegation that the island's independence was contingent on the sale of the Chagos Archipelago and the transfer of sovereignty to Britain. On November 8, 1965, the British government created the Crown Colony (see Glossary) of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The BIOT consisted of the Chagos Archipelago, earlier administered from the British Crown Colony of Mauritius; and the Aldabra Islands, the Farquhar Islands, and Île Desroches, previously administered from the British Crown Colony of Seychelles. In 1966 Britain leased the approximately eighteen-square-kilometer island of Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago to the United States for a fifty-year period until the year 2016, with a twenty-year extension available if neither London nor Washington opposed continuation. For political and security reasons, the British government resettled the indigenous population of 1,200 who lived on Diego Garcia in Mauritius and Seychelles, giving them US$8 million in compensation. The controversy surrounding these actions never has disappeared; even in 1994, the Mauritian government periodically attempted to reassert its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, especially Diego Garcia.

The closure of the Suez Canal during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War increased the importance of Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles, and, to a lesser extent, Mauritius. Shippers had to transport their goods around the Cape of Good Hope, and each of these islands had the potential to command the Cape route. The islands retained their significance after the canal reopened in 1975 because many of the supertankers built to carry petroleum over the longer route were now too large to pass through the canal.

In early 1968, the strategic situation in the Indian Ocean changed again when the British government announced its intention to withdraw all its military forces from east of the

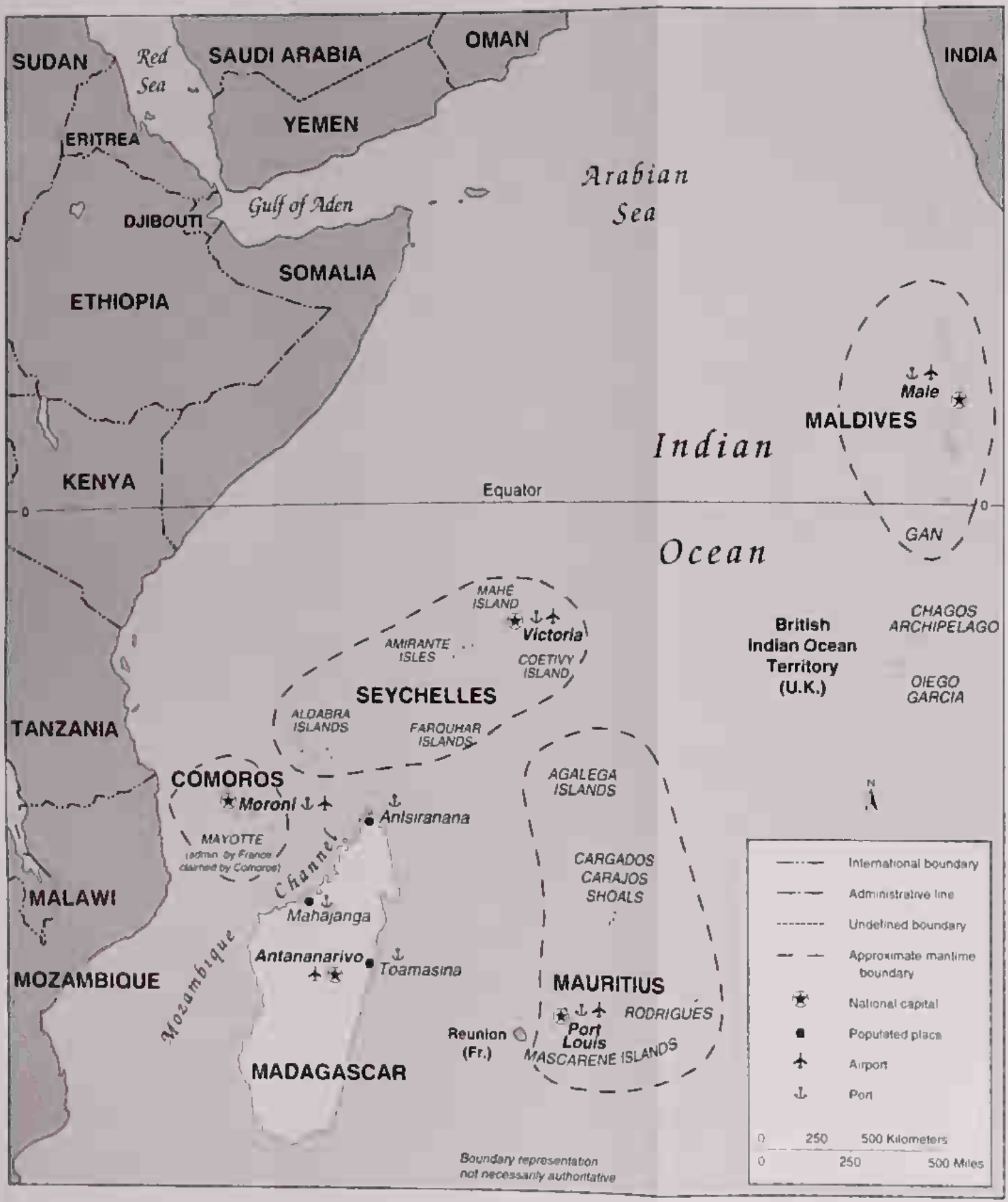


Figure 9. Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles: Strategic Airports and Ports, 1994

Suez Canal by 1971. Two months after this declaration, the Soviet Union deployed four warships to the Indian Ocean, and arranged for them to call at ports on the Indian subcontinent, the Persian Gulf, and the East Africa coast. After 1969 Soviet naval units regularly visited the region. Throughout the 1970s, Moscow also succeeded in gaining access to several countries, such as Madagascar and Seychelles, and increasing the number of Soviet intelligence, research, and fishing vessels operating in the Indian Ocean. As a result, the number of Soviet naval craft in the area often exceeded those of the United States.

The British pullback from east of Suez also led to an increased United States military presence in the Indian Ocean. In 1972 a new agreement allowed the United States to build a naval communications facility on Diego Garcia for British and United States use. Also, in 1972 the United States naval element, Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), extended its operational area to cover most of the Indian Ocean. In 1976 the United States transformed Diego Garcia into a naval support facility with deep-water docks and an expanded runway (see fig. 9).

For the next several decades, the United States and the Soviet Union competed with one another for strategic superiority in the Indian Ocean. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, President Jimmy Carter announced his intention to use military force to prevent any foreign power (i.e., the Soviet Union) from controlling the Persian Gulf region. The United States enhanced its ability to respond quickly to any military contingency by increasing its military presence in the Indian Ocean. After the downfall of Iran's imperial government in 1979, the United States deployed a second carrier task force to the area to join the one already on station. Additionally, the United States government concluded a series of military access agreements with Egypt, Kenya, Oman, and Somalia, and arranged to conduct joint military exercises with these countries. On March 1, 1980, President Carter also authorized the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, later reorganized as the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), whose area of responsibility includes Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

During the 1980s, the Indian Ocean continued to provoke competition between Washington and Moscow. The United

States increased its presence on Diego Garcia by building new airfield facilities and an air force satellite detection and tracking station, initiating Strategic Air Command (SAC) operations, improving navigational aids, and increasing anchorages and moorings for pre-positioned warehouse ships stationed permanently at the island.

From Moscow's perspective, its Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron performed a defensive mission against the United States, and promoted Soviet foreign policy in the region. Apart from access to naval facilities in Seychelles, Mauritius, and Reunion, the Soviet Union also conducted long-range maritime surveillance flights over much of the Indian Ocean. Despite this activity, Moscow avoided a military confrontation with Washington in the Indian Ocean, largely because it lacked modern, high-performance aircraft carriers and the ability to defend long sea and air lines of communication to and from the region.

France also remained active in the Indian Ocean during the Cold War years. Until 1973, the headquarters of the French forces was in Madagascar. After Antananarivo severed military relations with Paris, French forces operated from Reunion, Comoros, and Djibouti. Throughout much of the 1980s and the early 1990s, France maintained the second largest naval fleet in the Indian Ocean. In addition, France maintains 5,000 troops and a small number of fighter aircraft in Djibouti.

Madagascar

Security Concerns

Madagascar faces no external threat. During the 1980s, however, Madagascar experienced periods of tension with South Africa. Although it had the capabilities to launch an air or amphibious attack, South Africa never threatened Madagascar, largely because it feared international condemnation. Relations between the two countries gradually improved after Frederik Willem de Klerk became South Africa's president in 1989.

Since independence, several internal threats against the Malagasy government have emerged. This domestic instability reflects the growing restiveness of opposition elements and popular frustration with the government's inability to resolve the political, economic, and social problems confronting the island. Also, the Malagasy armed forces repeatedly have acted against the government for failing to preserve law and order.

The first serious challenge to the government occurred on April 1–2, 1971, when more than 1,000 armed members of the left-wing National Movement for the Independence of Madagascar (Mouvement National pour l'Indépendance de Madagascar—Monima) attacked five military posts in Tuléar Province. Government forces quickly restored order and imprisoned Monima's leader, Monja Jaona. According to a government communiqué, Monima casualties included forty-five killed, nine wounded, and 847 held for questioning; security forces suffered one killed and eleven wounded. According to Jaona, the revolt was directed against the local administration, which had failed to provide disaster relief to the province after it had experienced a drought, followed by floods caused by cyclones. Also at issue were government pressures for tax collection at a time when local cattle herds were being ravaged by disease.

In early 1972, what began as a student protest against French cultural domination of the island's schools quickly spread to a call for a general strike to protest poor economic conditions. Within days antigovernment protests arose both in the capital and in the provinces. On May 13, 1972, elements from the Republican Security Force (Force Républicaine de Sécurité—FRS) opened fire on a group of rioters in Antananarivo, killing between fifteen and forty and injuring about 150. The government also declared a state of national emergency. On May 18, 1972, President Philibert Tsiranana dissolved his government and turned over power to the army, under the command of General Gabriel Ramanantsoa. The army, which had remained neutral throughout the general strike, quickly restored order by placing military officers in control of the six provinces and establishing a new, multiethnic cabinet. In November 1972, after a national referendum, Ramanantsoa became the new head of state.

Continued political and economic instability doomed the Ramanantsoa regime. On December 31, 1974, the armed forces launched an unsuccessful coup attempt. On February 5, 1975, Ramanantsoa, hoping to promote political unity, handed over the government to the former minister of interior, Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava. On February 11, 1975, several members of the Mobile Police Group (Groupe Mobile de Police—GMP) assassinated Ratsimandrava. The government responded by declaring martial law, imposing censorship, and suspending political parties. Also, General Gilles Andriama-

hazo formed the National Military Directorate, consisting of nineteen military officers from all branches of service and from all over the island. On June 15, 1975, Didier Ratsiraka, who had a seat on the National Military Directorate, became head of state and president of the new ruling body, the Supreme Revolutionary Council.

The next major internal threat surfaced in the mid-1980s, when about 6,000 members of various Chinese martial arts Kung-Fu associations battled the Tanora Tonga Saina (TTS), which acted as Ratsiraka's private presidential security force. Problems started in September 1984, when Ratsiraka banned the practice of martial arts. After several clashes between Kung-Fu adherents and the TTS, a larger confrontation occurred on December 4, 1984, when Kung-Fu groups attacked TTS headquarters in Behorika and killed more than 100 TTS members. Kung-Fu demonstrations continued for the next few years. Finally, on July 31, 1986, army units supported by twelve armored cars and helicopters demolished Kung-Fu headquarters in Antananarivo, and killed the movement's leader and about 200 of his followers.

Cycles of escalating political unrest and increased governmental repression led to at least three failed coup attempts in 1989, 1990, and 1992. Moreover, general strike demonstrations organized by a prodemocracy opposition coalition called Comité des Forces Vives (Vital Forces Committee, known as Forces Vives) occurred in Antananarivo and several other Malagasy towns. Following the near paralysis of the economy and demonstrations at the presidential palace during which government forces opened fire on civilians, opposition leaders announced the formation of a transitional government of national unity. Eventually, presidential elections, held between November 1992 and February 1993, resulted in a victory for Forces Vives leader Albert Zafy over Ratsiraka.

Armed Forces in National Life

Madagascar has a rich military history. During the early nineteenth century, the Merina kings relied on the army to extend their control through most of Madagascar. A small permanent force of career soldiers formed the backbone of the royal army. Periodic levies of freepersons augmented these core units.Theoretically, military service was obligatory for all males, but conscription laws excused sons of members of the ruling class and barred slaves from serving in the army. All sol-

diers shared in the spoils of war as the Merina expanded and consolidated their control over the island.

During the 1820s, the army's size increased to about 14,000 professional soldiers. Britain, hoping to counter French influence in Madagascar, furnished new weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and technical assistance to the army. The British also helped reorganize and train the army.

Increasing French interest in Madagascar prompted numerous clashes with the island's indigenous forces. Between 1883 and 1885, France launched several attacks on Madagascar. To end hostilities, the Merina recognized French control over Diégo Suarez, agreed to pay an indemnity, and allowed a French resident at Antananarivo to control the country's foreign relations. In 1894 France declared a protectorate over the island, but the Malagasy refused to acknowledge French authority. After a French expeditionary force occupied the capital in September 1895, Queen Ranavalona III recognized the protectorate.

The Menalamba ("red togas," also given as "red cloth" and "red shawls"—armed guerrilla bands) revolt broke out between 1895 and 1899, however, among Merina conservatives against the institutions and agents of a repressive state-church society. Some observers also have suggested that the revolt was an attempt to overthrow the newly established colonial government. France reacted to this unrest by exiling the queen and the former prime minister to Algeria and by declaring Madagascar a French colony. The new French governor, General Joseph Gallieni, eventually pacified the country and carried out many reforms, including the abolition of slavery.

During the French period, which lasted from 1896 to 1960, the Malagasy could be conscripted into the colonial forces. During World War I and World War II, several thousand Malagasy served in France, North Africa, and other combat zones. After 1945 many Malagasy started agitating for independence. In March 1947, the Merina, who regarded themselves as Madagascar's genuine rulers, and some *côtiers* (literally coastal people, an ethnic group), staged an uprising against the French. The island's colonial governor responded by unleashing a reign of terror against the rebels. Estimates of the numbers of Malagasy who died in the revolt ranged from 11,000 to 80,000 (relatively few French soldiers died during the fighting). Notwithstanding these losses, France retained its influence in Madagascar, even after the island gained its independence.

During the postcolonial period, the Malagasy armed forces reflected the French heritage. Military personnel continued to receive training in France and to use French-manufactured weapons. Moreover, with the exception of a brief period in the late 1970s, French military advisers continued to serve in Madagascar.

The Military and the Government

After he came to power in 1975, Ratsiraka promised to create a "socialist revolution." As part of this policy, Ratsiraka enlarged and reorganized the security forces to make them appropriate for a "people's army" in a "socialist revolutionary" state. In 1975 he renamed the National Army the People's Armed Forces (Forces Armées Populaires—FAP) and expanded its mission. Henceforth, the FAP engaged in civic-action programs and spread ideological education in the countryside. Between 1975 and 1980, the FAP doubled in size.

This reorganization diluted the power of the former National Army, which owed little loyalty to Ratsiraka. To prevent the FAP from challenging his authority, Ratsiraka started transferring able and experienced officers from troop command responsibilities to more senior, but less powerful, positions. Invariably, the new posts were in the inspector general's section of the Office of the President and in various Ministry of Defense committees that studied how the FAP could best facilitate national development.

Despite these changes, the FAP contributed little to the country's "socialist revolution" although it remained a potentially important political player. Nevertheless, Ratsiraka, relying on manipulation and intimidation, retained almost absolute control of the armed forces until the growth of the prodemocracy movement in the early 1990s. Prodemocracy and antidemocracy factions emerged in the FAP and many other government security services. Clashes among these factions added to the political turmoil sweeping through Madagascar, eventually dooming the Ratsiraka regime.

After the FAP was formed in 1975, the cost of maintaining the military establishment became a greater burden on the national budget. The FAP itself annually assessed the military's needs, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defense, which then sent budget recommendations to Ratsiraka. After the Cold War ended and foreign military assistance declined, the Malagasy defense budget also decreased from more than US$101 million

People's Armed Forces troops of Madagascar
Courtesy
Thomas P. Ofcansky

in 1979 to about US$36 million in 1991 (see table 8, Appendix).

Forces Armées Populaires

In 1994 the FAP numbered about 21,000. Madagascar's president is commander in chief of the FAP. There is no reserve force. Males aged eighteen to fifty are subject to conscription for eighteen months of military or civil service. The majority of conscripts belong to the relatively poor *côtiers* because exceptions to the conscription law allow influential or prosperous persons to avoid military service. The officer corps remains a promising career for most Malagasy. The FAP is divided into two operational services, the army and the aeronaval forces. The former is responsible for land operations and ground-based air defense; however, its primary role has been to defend state institutions and the president from armed opposition. The latter conducts air, naval, and amphibious operations.

The 20,000-member army, which is deployed as a coastal and internal security force, consisted in 1994 of two battalions and one engineer regiment. Because Madagascar lacks an indigenous arms production industry, the army imports all its equipment. The army weapons system includes Soviet PT–76 light tanks, various reconnaissance vehicles, and United States

M–3A1 half-track armored personnel carriers (see table 9, Appendix). The army also has air defense guns, artillery pieces, mortars, and rocket launchers.

The mission of the aeronaval forces' 500-member air component includes combat, transport, and maritime patrol duties. The air force maintains its headquarters at Ivato, near Antananarivo, and operates from bases at Antalaha, Antsohihy, Arivoniamamo, Diégo Suarez, Fianarantsoa, Fort Dauphin, Majunga, Nosy-Be, Tamatave, and Tuléar. The air force consists of one fighter squadron, a transport squadron, and a helicopter squadron. In addition, the air force has liaison aircraft and trainer aircraft.

The 500-member Malagasy navy includes 100 marines and lacks a seagoing capability. It performs a coastal patrol mission from bases at Diégo Suarez, Tamatave, Fort Dauphin, Tuléar, and Majunga. The naval inventory consists of one patrol boat and three amphibious craft.

State Security Services

Madagascar has five state security services in addition to the FAP: the National Gendarmerie, the FRS, the Civil Police, the Civil Service, and the Antigang Brigade. With the exception of the National Gendarmerie, all these units are outside the FAP chain of command.

A 7,500-member National Gendarmerie operates within the Ministry of Defense. This organization maintains public order, preserves security at the village level, protects government facilities, pursues criminals, and prevents cattle rustling. National Gendarmerie units are stationed throughout the island. The organization's equipment inventory includes automatic weapons, armored cars, and aircraft. The National Gendarmerie also operates a maritime police contingent with five patrol craft.

Shortly after becoming president, Tsiranana created the 700-member FRS to safeguard his personal security and to act as an antiriot unit. By 1972 the FRS, which eventually became the GMP, included about 1,000 personnel. In late 1981, Ratsiraka established and commanded a similar organization called the Presidential Security Regiment (Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle—Reser), or simply the Presidential Guard. Initially, North Korean instructors trained this 1,200-member unit, whose personnel belonged to Ratsiraka's Betsimisaraka ethnic group. The Presidential Guard has a bunker at Iavoloha

near Antananarivo; the guard includes the Mahajamba Regiment, which specializes in riot control. In the late 1980s, the French assumed responsibility for training the Presidential Guard.

A 3,000-member Civil Police force is attached to the Ministry of Interior. Most Civil Police personnel serve in the island's cities. The head of each prefecture commands at least a small contingent. Like the National Gendarmerie, the Civil Police often overreact during times of civil strife, thus earning the enmity of protesters. Since the late 1980s, however, both organizations have attempted to improve their image.

The Civil Service is a paramilitary force that serves as a reserve element of the defense forces. Its operations are nonmilitary in nature and often involve working in rural and social development programs. Potential draftees serve in the Civil Service as an alternative to regular military duty.

During his early days as president, Ratsiraka created a 300-member intelligence and political investigation unit known as the General Directorate of Information and Documentation, Internal and External (Direction Générale de l'Information et de la Documentation, Intérieure et Extérieure—DGIDIE). This organization, whose personnel were trained originally by German Democratic Republic (GDR—East Germany) and then by French advisers, has unlimited arrest and detention powers. To perform its duties, the DGIDIE relies on a vast network of informers to ferret out dissenters, currency violators, and potential political opponents of the president. Over the years, the DGIDIE has been accused of violating human rights, engaging in corrupt practices, and imprisoning foreign nationals accused of spying.

In February 1989, the French helped Madagascar establish an Antigang Brigade. This unit, which reports to the Ministry of Interior, is responsible for combatting hijackers, terrorists, and dangerous criminals. French security advisers train the brigade.

Training and Morale

Prior to independence, the French conducted all military training. In 1966 the Malagasy government, with French assistance, established the Military Academy (Académie Militaire) at Antsirabe. This school trains officers for the armed forces, the National Gendarmerie, and the Civil Service. In 1967 the first students enrolled in a three-year program that included

courses in military and civic affairs. Students specialize in arts or sciences. A few foreign officers, usually from francophone African countries, also study at the Military Academy.

The May 1972 student strikes affected the Military Academy, which temporarily suspended examinations after students complained about the curriculum. Over the next several weeks, academy officials agreed to consider modernizing course material, examinations, entry requirements, and general educational policies.

In addition to training officers at the Military Academy, the Malagasy government annually selects a small number of officer candidates to attend the French Military Academy at St. Cyr. Also, until military relations were severed in the mid-1970s, Malagasy and French units participated in joint annual exercises.

During the Cold War, hundreds, if not thousands, of FAP personnel received military training from several Soviet-bloc countries, including the former Soviet Union, the former GDR, Cuba, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Beginning in the mid-1980s, France resumed training limited numbers of Malagasy military personnel. The United States also started an International Military Education and Training (IMET) program that sought to enhance the FAP's professional skills and reduce dependence on East European countries. By the early 1990s, the United States had expanded the IMET program to include management and technical training with emphasis on construction engineering skills and medical courses.

Historically, morale in the armed forces has been good, if for no other reason than that the military provides job security in a country plagued by high unemployment. However, many *côtiers* who have been conscripted to serve in the ranks resent the lack of opportunity and the Merina domination of the officer corps. Also, with the decline of foreign military assistance since the end of the Cold War, poor morale has become a problem in many FAP units.

Foreign Military Assistance

Since independence, the Malagasy armed forces have relied on numerous countries for military assistance. Historically, France has been the most powerful and most influential of Madagascar's military allies, despite the rift between the two countries in the 1970s. Other nations that have provided mili-

tary assistance to Madagascar include the former Soviet Union, North Korea, the former Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), and the United States.

On June 27, 1960, the day after independence, Paris and Antananarivo signed an accord that empowered France to protect Madagascar and to establish military bases on the island. France also gained freedom of movement in Madagascar's airspace and coastal waters. A joint Franco-Malagasy defense command—consisting of the island's president, the French ambassador, and the commander of France's Third Overseas Zone, the southwestern Indian Ocean—managed the security relationship between the two countries. France also agreed to transfer about 4,500 Malagasy personnel who had been serving in the French forces to Madagascar's newly established armed forces.

French officers and French-trained Merina officers dominated the Malagasy armed forces. Additionally, the presence of French officers in Madagascar helped to maintain professionalism and noninvolvement of the military in politics. President Tsiranana, with French support, tried to offset Merina domination in the officer corps by sending promising *côtier* military personnel to France for training and assigning them to important positions upon their return to Madagascar.

Apart from these activities, France also equipped the Malagasy armed forces. During the first five years of independence, France provided military aid worth approximately US$5 million annually, which included technical assistance, training, and nearly all the arms and equipment for the Malagasy armed forces. France also maintained about 2,500 troops at Diégo Suarez and Antsirabe; by 1972 this number had grown to approximately 4,000. A general with the title of senior commander of French Forces in the southern Indian Ocean was in charge of these troops, as well as of French forces on Reunion and Comoros. His forces included a marine parachute regiment, a Foreign Legion regiment, and several internal security units. French air units, based primarily at Ivato airfield, had helicopters and transport aircraft, and naval units operated three destroyer-size vessels, a tanker, a logistical support ship, and escort vessels.

Franco-Malagasy military relations changed radically in the early 1970s. Ramanantsoa's government demanded the withdrawal of French military forces from Antananarivo and announced that it would allow France to have access to the

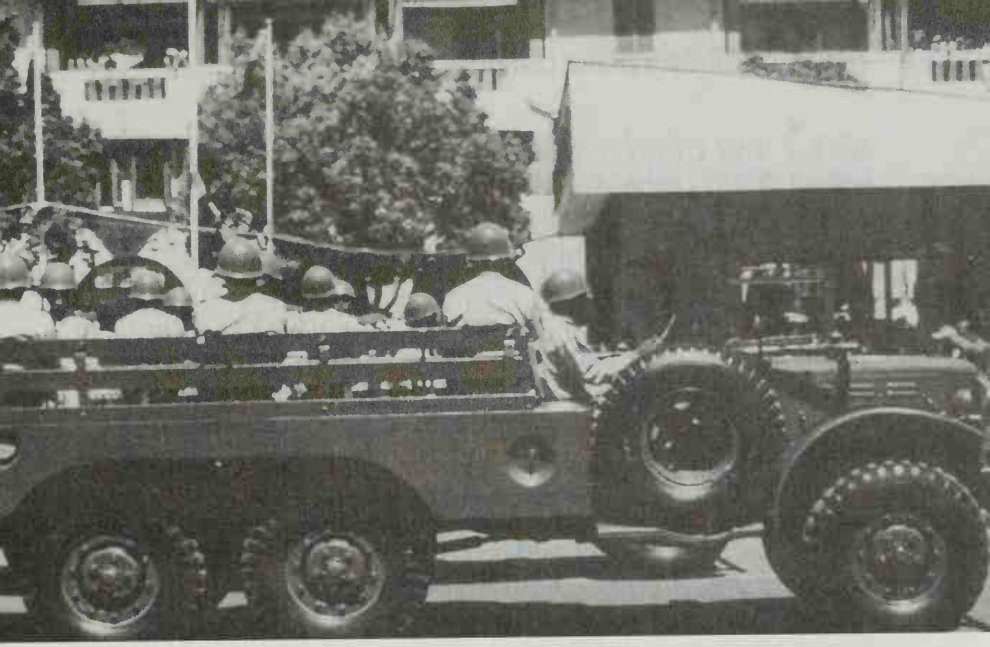
Diégo Suarez naval base only on a renewable basis. By 1975 the French government, which opposed the tenuous nature of this proposed new relationship, had withdrawn all its military units from Madagascar.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Franco-Malagasy relations improved. Between 1982 and 1988, for example, 783 Malagasy officers enrolled in various military courses in France. In 1989 France financed the formation of the Antigang Brigade. On April 5, 1990, France announced that it had donated eight Auverland jeeps fitted with weapons, two ambulances, military engineering equipment, accessories for service vehicles, and 8,290 air force and navy uniforms. France also supplied the Malagasy gendarmes with equipment and a variety of other technical and material aid.

The democratization movement again altered the nature of the Franco-Malagasy military relationship. On August 15, 1991, French president François Mitterrand ordered the withdrawal of French military advisers who were in charge of the personal security of Malagasy president Ratsiraka. This action occurred after the Presidential Guard opened fire and killed thirty-one demonstrators at a prodemocracy rally. Relations between the two countries improved after Zafy was elected president in early 1993, and French security technicians provided him with an independent communications system.

Former West Germany was another important source of military assistance in the immediate postindependence era. By 1964 Bonn had furnished approximately US$1.6 million of military assistance, including thirty jeeps and five coastal patrol boats. Additionally, fifty-five Malagasy naval personnel were studying at military schools in West Germany.

During the Ratsiraka era, the FAP gradually abandoned its almost total reliance on France for equipment and training, and looked to several communist nations for foreign military assistance. During the 1975–82 period, the FAP acquired artillery, small arms, and ammunition from North Korea and the People's Republic of China; two landing craft from North Korea; three Mi–8 helicopters, twelve MiG–21 jet fighter aircraft, and two An–26 transport aircraft from the former Soviet Union. North Korea also provided four MiG–17s on long-term loan, and about ninety military advisers who furnished crew and maintenance support for these aircraft. Approximately 130 Soviet technicians maintained the MiG–21s and the An–26s. FAP personnel received training from Cuban, Romanian,



Malagasy armored personnel carrier
Malagasy armored scout car
Courtesy Thomas P. Ofcansky

Soviet, and Chinese instructors. As Ratsiraka's radicalism waned, Madagascar distanced itself from these countries. The collapse of the Soviet Union signaled the end of Madagascar's reliance on the communist world for military assistance.

Since 1960 the United States and Madagascar have maintained diplomatic relations. Because of Ratsiraka's radicalism and Madagascar's relations with the communist world, however, the two countries did not establish a military relationship until the mid-1980s. In 1984 the United States initiated an IMET program (see Training and Morale, this ch.). The following year, one Malagasy officer attended the Naval War College and another studied at the Army Command and General Staff College; in addition, six mid-level officers enrolled in advanced engineering, infantry, field artillery, and communications courses. Also, in fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1985, the United States approved a Military Assistance Program (MAP) for Madagascar, which included funds for medical supplies and Caterpillar earth-moving and road-building equipment. In July 1988, the United States provided US$1.2 million worth of military engineering equipment to Madagascar's Department of Military Engineering for National Development. Madagascar and the United States also cooperated on several military development projects such as construction of roads, schools, and health centers for the FAP. The FY 1989 MAP provided for maintenance support for the Malagasy Air Force's C–47 Dakota fleet. In the late 1980s, Washington earmarked US$200,000 for a civic-action project designed to build low-cost housing. In 1987 a "Seabee" battalion deployed to Manjakandriana to give a two-month training course to fifty-two men of the Third Regiment of the Malagasy Army's Development Force. By the early 1990s, the United States had confined its military aid objectives to developing Madagascar's military engineering capability, supporting the air force's transport aircraft, and providing managerial and technical training to the armed forces.

Penal System

The Malagasy penal code is based primarily on French penal codes and procedures and has been somewhat influenced by Malagasy customary law. The Malagasy penal code affords the accused most of the rights and protections granted under French and Western laws. The most severe punishments are death and forced labor for life.

Madagascar has three levels of courts. Lower courts are responsible for civil and criminal cases carrying limited fines and sentences. The Court of Appeals includes a criminal court for cases carrying sentences of five years or more. The Supreme Court functions as the highest court in the country. A separate and autonomous Constitutional High Court (also known as the Administrative and Financial Constitutional Court) reviews laws, decrees, and ordinances. It monitors elections and certifies their results. A military court has jurisdiction over all cases that involve national security.

Madagascar has a nationwide prison system. Both men and women sentenced to long terms normally serve their time at the Central Prison (Maison Centrale) in Antananarivo. Each province has a central prison for inmates serving sentences of less than five years. At the seats of various courts, there also are at least twenty-five lesser prisons for individuals serving terms of less than two years and for prisoners awaiting trial. Courts at the local (subprefecture) level maintain jails for lesser offenders serving sentences of up to six months.

Conditions in Malagasy prisons are harsh. Cells built for one often house up to eight prisoners. Family members of prisoners need to augment the inadequate daily food rations. Prisoners without relatives often go for several days without food. Inmates also suffer from numerous medical problems that are not usually treated, including malnutrition, infections, malaria, and tuberculosis. Children of women prisoners normally live in prisons with their mothers. Female inmates sometimes engage in prostitution in collusion with guards.

Human Rights

By developing country standards, Madagascar has a moderately good human rights record. However, numerous human rights violations, largely committed during the Ratsiraka regime, have caused concern among international humanitarian agencies. In the late 1970s, the government enacted the law Information against X for Plotting and Attacking State Security, under which anyone can be arrested without warrant and held indefinitely without trial. The law also enables the security forces to arrest, search, or seize property. Under the French penal code, arrest is limited to forty-eight hours, but in Madagascar the arrest time is extended to fifteen days and is renewable indefinitely. The authorities do not release information about the status of the detainees, who often may be real or sus-

pected opponents of the government. Many individuals in custody are beaten, tortured, or deprived of medical care.

In the 1990s, Madagascar's human rights record became more controversial. During the prodemocracy unrest of the early 1990s, the Malagasy government acted against the opposition. In July 1991, for example, government troops abducted and briefly detained four Forces Vives leaders who had been nominated as provisional government ministers. On August 10, 1991, the Presidential Guard fired on a crowd of some 300,000 people marching on the President's Palace to call for Ratsiraka's resignation. At least thirty demonstrators were killed and 200 wounded. On October 23, 1991, security forces killed at least twelve people and wounded about seventy during a prodemocracy demonstration in the capital.

In 1992 government violence continued to claim victims throughout the country. On March 31, 1992, the authorities killed eight and wounded thirty-one people when hundreds of pro-Ratsiraka demonstrators tried to force their way into the National Forum's debate on a new constitution. In October 1992, government troops killed eight people during a clash with a pro-Ratsiraka group that was trying to close the Antsiranana airport.

Madagascar has, however, taken steps to improve its human rights record. In December 1990, the government abolished press censorship; by mid-1991, the state-owned Malagasy Radio-Television allowed opposition figures to appear on a weekly discussion program. The DGIDIE director, a former judge appointed in mid-1990, worked to prevent abuses against prisoners held in custody. Legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention are not always followed, however, especially in rural areas. Most Western observers maintain that Madagascar's human rights record will probably improve as a result of the country's commitment to democratization and increasing civilian control over the military.

Mauritius

Security Concerns

Mauritius faces no external security threat. At least since 1980, Mauritius has not experienced significant, large-scale political violence. Several assassination attempts have been made against Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth, but these

actions were by disaffected individuals rather than any antigovernment group.

Armed Forces in National Life

Traditionally, the armed forces have played a minimal role in Mauritian national life. In 1859 the British colonial government established the first Mauritian Police Force, with a separate unit for Port Louis. An 1893 ordinance expanded the police force, which by 1899 numbered 700 personnel, 300 of whom were stationed in Port Louis and the remainder at eight other locations. The officer corps included one inspector general and seven inspectors, and the other ranks had twelve subinspectors. With the exception of about 100 police who carried Martini Henry rifles, the police force was unarmed. Europeans, Creoles, and Indians served in the police. Initial recruitment into the police was for a period of not more than three years. The colonial government allowed men of good character to reenlist for a further five years.

Except during 1942, when a Japanese attack seemed imminent, World War II had little impact on Mauritius although Mauritians fought in North Africa and the Middle East. Additionally, the Royal Mauritius Regiment, a small part-time home defense volunteer unit, deployed to Madagascar to safeguard lines of communication. This regiment became involved in a mutiny in Madagascar caused by tensions among British, Franco-Mauritians, and Creoles in the military.

After the British garrison withdrew from Mauritius in 1960, the authorities created the paramilitary Special Mobile Force (SMF), with six officers and 146 enlisted personnel to maintain internal security. The separate regular police force was divided into special divisions, including criminal investigation, riot control, traffic control, immigration and passports, and water police.

On at least two occasions during the last few years before independence, the SMF required British assistance to maintain internal security. On May 10, 1965, political grievances caused armed clashes between the Hindu and Creole communities. After the governor declared a state of emergency, a company of 2d Battalion, Coldstream Guards, flew from Aden to Mauritius to help keep the peace. These troops remained on the island until July 1965.

On January 22, 1968, the governor again requested British soldiers to help maintain order. The authorities feared that

politically motivated violence between the capital's "Istanbul" Muslim gang and the rival "Texas" Creole gang in Port Louis would spread to the rest of the island. Troops from B Company of 1st Battalion, The King's Shropshire Light Infantry, deployed to Mauritius from Malaysia, and worked with the police and the SMF to restore peace.

With independence in 1968, almost all internal security duties became the responsibility of the Mauritian government. Under the terms of a joint defense agreement announced on March 11, 1968, however, the British government agreed to help Mauritius combat any internal security threat and to train local security and police forces. This agreement remained in effect until 1975. During the early 1970s, the Mauritian regime used the SMF to jail opposition politicians and trade union members. By the 1980s, however, such practices had stopped.

Police Agencies

Since independence, Mauritius has refrained from establishing an army, largely because of the cost of maintaining such a force. Instead, the security establishment includes the National Police Force, which consists of a regular armed police of about 4,000 personnel, the paramilitary 1,300-member SMF, and the 240-member Special Support Unit (SSU), all of which are responsible for internal security. In 1994 the SMF had six rifle elements, two mobile elements, one engineer company, and support troops. A Special Constabulary and a small Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit operate under police jurisdiction.

Mauritius lacks a traditional military budget. Expenditures for the various police defense forces in FY 1994 are estimated at MauR 207.2 million (for value of the Mauritian rupee—see Glossary), or about US$11.3 million.

The National Police Force reports to a police commissioner, who in turn comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Security. For all intents and purposes, however, Prime Minister Jugnauth commands the police. Equipment used by all these organizations includes small arms, rifles, riot-control gear such as clubs and shields, and tear gas canisters. The transportation inventory includes Land Rovers, light scout cars, and at least two helicopters. Recruitment is by voluntary enlistment from all ethnic communities. Training is usually conducted in Mauritius; however, some officers have trained in foreign military academies such as the Royal Military Academy at

Sandhurst in Britain. In 1990 the Mauritian government approved the construction of a Police Academy at Vacoas.

In addition, at least two security organizations report to the prime minister's office. In 1982 the Mauritian government established the National Investigation Unit (NIU), which had been known as the State Service, to monitor internal security developments and the activities of foreign embassies and certain foreign visitors. This organization includes up to 200 full-time agents, all of whom are recruited from the regular police force, and 3,000 informers scattered throughout the country. In 1989, after an unsuccessful attempt on his life, Jugnauth ordered the establishment of a 100-member Very Important Persons Security Unit.

Mauritius maintains a small air patrol to undertake maritime surveillance, to perform search and rescue missions, and to patrol the country's EEZ. The aircraft inventory includes two specially configured Dornier-228s, which were operated by Indian crews until the first Mauritians were trained.

The mission of the 500-member National Coast Guard (NCG) is to ensure the safety of Mauritian fishers, prevent smuggling, and protect the marine environment. The NCG inventory includes two Soviet-built surveillance craft, the CGS Rescuer, and the CGS Retriever. Both vessels carry cannons with 1,000-meter-plus precise-target air or marine-surface strike capability. In March 1993, the NCG purchased a 210-ton Indian-built seaward defense boat. This vessel is armed with two Bofors 40/60 guns and carries a thirty-two-member crew. Acquisition of this boat improved the NCG's coastal surveillance capability. An Indian naval officercommands the NCG; an unknown number of NCG personnel have received training from Indian naval instructors.

On March 25–26, 1994, the Mauritian government announced that it had awarded a US$14.6 million contract to the Chilean navy's Naval Docks and Yards (Astilleros y Maestranzas de la Armada) yard for construction of an Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV). The vessel will be armed with a turret-mounted, automatic, 40mm cannon on the foredeck and several 12.7mm or smaller-caliber machine guns on flexible mountings. The NCG will use the OPV to protect its fisheries and EEZ, perform search and rescue, fight fires, contain pollution, and serve as a mobile emergency command center. Chile will deliver the vessel in March 1996. Mauritius has an option to buy a second OPV.

Foreign Military Assistance

Historically, Mauritius has received little foreign military assistance. In January 1990, the former Soviet Union presented Mauritian authorities with two patrol boats, each of which can carry a twenty-member crew. An eight-member Soviet training team rovided the NCG a ninety-day orientation training program on the use of these vessels. A five-member Soviet mechanic and engineer team remained in Mauritius for one year to service the patrol boats.

Since independence, France, Britain, and India have provided an array of equipment and training to various Mauritian police units. Following two assassination attempts against Jugnauth in 1988 and 1989, for example, India provided a security adviser, J.N. Taimini, to help Mauritius upgrade its security services. France also has provided security assistance to bolster Jugnauth's personal bodyguard. In March 1990, the British donated a modern explosives detector to the SMF. Often, these nations have competed with one another. In June 1991, France withdrew two military cooperation agents after Mauritius granted India a contract for communications and broadcasting equipment for the SMF.

Since the late 1980s, the United States has become more active in Mauritius. In FY 1988 Washington initiated an IMET program to increase the SMF's defensive capabilities. Since then, the IMET program has sought to enhance the country's ability to protect its EEZ and combat narcotics trafficking by offering training in small boat maintenance and coastal patrol.

Penal System

Laws governing the Mauritian penal system are derived partly from old French codes and from English law. The judicial system consists of the Supreme Court, presided over by the chief justice and five other judges who also serve as judges of the Court of Appeal, the Industrial Court, and ten district courts. Final appeal can be made to the Queen's Privy Council in Britain; approximately 50 percent of the Supreme Court rulings referred to the Privy Council have been reversed. Mauritius has no military courts. The prison system consists of four facilities: a prison, a rehabilitation center, a youth institution, and an industrial school. The daily average prison population is 700.

Human Rights

The Mauritian government has a history of respecting basic human rights. The constitution protects political and civil rights, including freedom of speech and of the press. In 1991 the government enacted the Public Gathering Act, which prevents indefinite detention without charge or trial. During the early 1990s, there were no reports of political or other extrajudicial killings or disappearances. Various Mauritian media reports have alleged that the police have mistreated or killed criminal suspects; however, follow-up investigations have failed to confirm any consistent pattern of abuse.

Seychelles

Security Concerns

Seychelles confronts no external security threat. During the Cold War, however, Seychelles faced several threats from foreign powers interested in the country's strategic position astride the Indian Ocean's oil-tanker lanes. In particular, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, President France Albert René feared South African aggression. On at least two occasions, he accused South Africa of trying to overthrow his regime. Both incidents involved Colonel Michael "Mad Mike" Hoare, a mercenary who allegedly had been acting on behalf of the South African government. The first coup attempt occurred in November 1979, when René announced that he had foiled a plot "sponsored from abroad with the cooperation of mercenaries standing ready in Durban." The authorities arrested but later released eighty coup plotters. Although a South African connection could not be ruled out, some Western observers believed the affair was French inspired.

The second, more serious coup attempt occurred on November 25, 1981, when a group of forty-five European mercenaries, led by Colonel Hoare, arrived at Mahé International Airport on a commercial flight from Swaziland to overthrow the René regime. The Seychellois authorities quickly thwarted the coup attempt, known as Operation Anvil, and the mercenaries hijacked an Air India plane and forced the captain to fly them to Durban, South Africa. As soon as the aircraft arrived, the South African police arrested all the mercenaries. Several of the mercenaries, including Colonel Hoare, served time in

jail for their involvement in Operation Anvil. On May 7, 1985, Colonel Hoare was freed under a general presidential pardon.

Seychellois-South African relations began to improve in the aftermath of Operation Anvil, following what appeared to be a secret agreement. In exchange for the release of South African prisoners in Seychelles, the South African government promised to refrain from future actions against the René regime, help guarantee Seychellois security, and provide an indemnity payment to Seychelles. In July 1992, Pretoria announced that it would pay Victoria, the capital of Seychelles, about 8 million rand in compensation for Operation Anvil. On November 8, 1993, the two countries established diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level.

In 1986 another coup attempt against the René regime occurred, supposedly involving the United States, France, and Britain. In addition to this foreign connection, the plot, known as Operation Distant Lash, included thirty mercenaries and some 350 partisans in Seychelles. The figurehead of this coup attempt was Minister of Defense Ogilvy Berlouis, who reportedly was groomed to be the country's new pro-Western president. Security forces thwarted the attempt, however, subsequently arresting Berlouis and forcing several officers of the Seychellois army, the Seychelles People's Liberation Army (SPLA), to resign.

In July 1987, British police uncovered yet another plot to overthrow the René regime and to abduct leading members of the African National Congress (ANC), the South African opposition movement that maintained an office in London. The authorities eventually arrested four men and charged them with conspiracy to kidnap the ANC members; the charges were later withdrawn because of insufficient evidence.

Since independence, numerous internal threats against the Seychellois government have arisen. After overthrowing James Mancham's regime on June 5, 1977, René quickly established a socialist one-party state, censored the rival newspaper, and abolished religious fee-paying schools. René also created an army and a large security apparatus for the first time in the country's history.

As a result of such controversial policies, popular resentment against the René regime grew and thousands of Seychellois went into exile to form opposition groups to overthrow René. In April 1978, some of James Mancham's followers unsuccessfully tried to overthrow the government when René

was on a state visit to North Korea and China. The Movement for Resistance (Mouvement pour la Résistance), which sought to restore democracy in Seychelles, indicated that about 100 of its members had financed the November 1981 coup attempt. The Seychelles Liberation Committee, established in 1979 by exiles in Paris, also wanted to remove René and abolish his one-party state. The Seychelles National Movement maintained that it was a broad-based opposition group with followers in Seychelles, Britain, and Australia. The Seychelles Popular Anti-Marxist Front (SPAMF) declared that it had unsuccessfully tried to persuade the South African government to support a SPAMF coup attempt against René. Most Western observers believed that, notwithstanding the November 1981 coup attempt, these exile organizations had little chance of effecting a change of government in Seychelles, largely because they had few supporters in the country and minimal resources. With the end of the Cold War and the successful transition to multiparty politics in Seychelles through elections in 1993, the external and internal threats against the René regime have dissipated.

Armed Forces in National Life

Prior to 1977, Seychelles had no armed forces. Instead, there was a small police force modeled along British lines. René believed that the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF), which he created in 1977, would help preserve the country's revolution and advance socialism. Although the armed forces have been largely loyal to René, on at least one occasion, the SPLA staged a mutiny against the René regime. On August 17–18, 1982, some eighty-eight noncommissioned officers and enlisted personnel seized the Victoria radio station and port, police stations, telegraph facilities, and the Union Vale army camp. The mutineers demanded a change in the composition and ideological orientation of the René regime, the expulsion of all Tanzanian military advisers, and an improvement in the living conditions of the ordinary soldier. Within thirty-six hours, loyalist forces, supported by approximately 400 Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF) personnel, crushed the mutiny and recaptured all key installations. In April 1983, the government concluded a secret court martial of the mutineers. Since then, the armed forces have acquiesced in the goals and policies of the René regime.

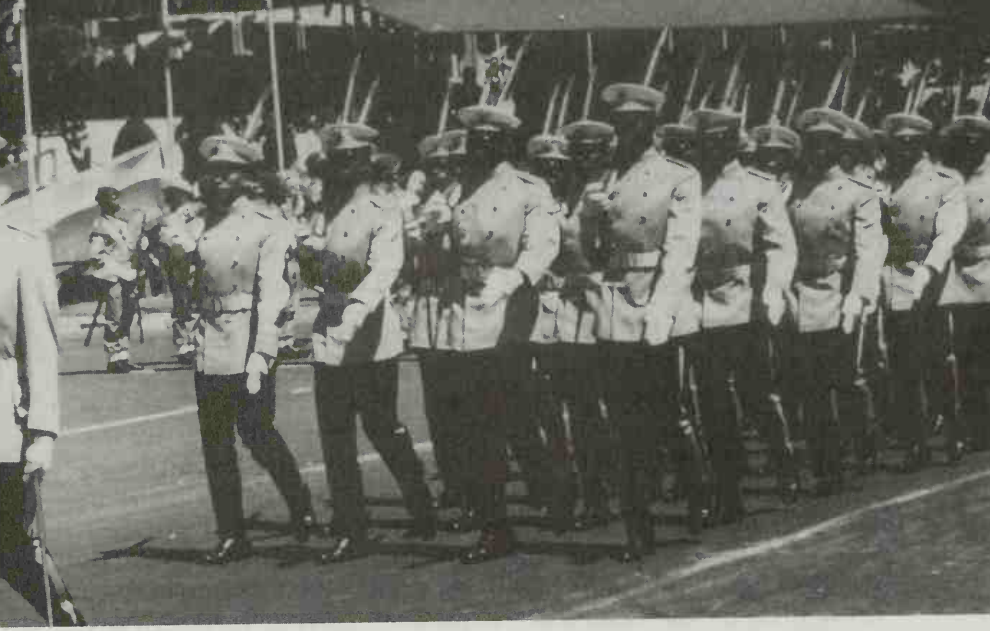
Seychelles People's Defence Forces

The SPDF consists of the SPLA, the Seychelles People's Navy, and the Seychelles People's Air Force. In December 1992, the government amalgamated the Seychelles People's Navy and the Seychelles People's Air Force to form the 250-member Seychelles Coast Guard (since increased to 300 members). Each service commander reports to the armed forces chief of staff, who is responsible to the commander in chief, René. The president also retains the minister of defense portfolio. The Defence Forces Council, which is chaired by the armed forces chief of staff, manages the SPDF.

The 1,000-member SPLA includes the 800-member army and the 300-member Presidential Guard. The army consists of one infantry battalion and two artillery elements. The SPDF also consists of the 300-member Seychelles Coast Guard, which includes the 100-member air wing and eighty marines. The army possesses six BRDM reconnaissance vehicles, armored personnel carriers, three D–130 122mm towed artillery pieces, six M–43 82mm mortars, ten SA–7 surface-to-air missiles, and an unknown number of RPG–7 rocket launchers. The SPLA's mission includes defending the nation's territorial integrity and, when necessary, assisting the People's Militia in preserving domestic law and order. Because much of its equipment is in need of maintenance, the army has minimal capabilities. Western observers believe that the army would be ineffective against a professional military force.

The 100-member air wing of the coast guard operates one Britten-Norman BN–2A Maritime Defender and a Cessna 152 trainer. The Britten-Norman, donated by the British government in 1980, patrols the EEZ, which extends over an area of almost 1 million square kilometers. It normally works with the patrol boats from the navy wing of the coast guard, searching for vessels engaged in smuggling and illegal fishing. The aircraft also conducts light transport, search and rescue, and medical evacuation missions. The air wing is the most effective service with equipment in good operating condition.

The navy wing of the coast guard, based in Port Victoria, owns one Italian Andromache, one Soviet Zoroaster, two Soviet Zhuk inland patrol boats, and one amphibious landing craft. The navy wing patrols the country's EEZ and conducts antidrug and search and rescue missions, and marine pollution containment. The navy wing's effectiveness is extremely limited, largely because it rarely has more than two of its vessels



Cadets of Madagascar Military Academy, Antsirabe
Motorcycle force of Madagascar gendarmerie
Courtesy Thomas P. Ofcansky

operational at one time. In 1994 the government asked the United States to fund a two-year US$400,000 Coast Guard Development Program. The United States refused because of lack of funds.

State Security Services

The People's Militia has existed since the beginning of the René regime. On June 10, 1977, the president called for volunteers to register for training in the People's Militia, which was to guard against a countercoup by James Mancham. By the early 1990s, the 1,000-member People's Militia consisted largely of untrained and unfit volunteers. Its mission is to defend the country from external aggression and to preserve the revolution. In June 1989, René assumed overall control of the People's Militia; the chief of staff is responsible for running it on a day-to-day basis. The People's Militia is divided into five military regions (north, central, west, south Mahé, and Praslin). Most Western observers consider the People's Militia a totally ineffective force.

The national police, which is organized along British lines and commanded by a police commissioner, includes a regular 500-member unit and a sixty-member paramilitary mobile unit. Members of the force normally are unarmed, but mobile unit personnel are equipped with modern weapons, including 7.62mm rifles. For operational and administrative purposes, Seychelles is divided into the Central Police Division, which comprises the capital; North Police Division; South Police Division; and Praslin/La Digue Police Division. A senior police officer commands each of these formations. Seychelles maintains a total of seventeen police stations in all divisions. The police organization includes headquarters, Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Force (Police Mobile Unit), general duties, and special branch. A commandant manages the police training school at Praslin. This school provides fifteen-week and refresher training courses for recruits, two-week supervisory officers' courses, two-week promotion courses, and four-week basic courses. Each district also has field training. Most Western observers agree that the national police forces are under strength and poorly paid. As a result, they have limited military value.

President France Albert René maintains a 300-member Presidential Guard for his own protection. This unit, which includes an unknown number of European mercenaries, has high-quality personnel and weapons. The army of 800 mem-

bers in 1994 includes the Presidential Guard, supplemented by an infantry battalion and two artillery elements.

Information about Seychelles defense spending is limited. The 1991 defense expenditures, which were decided by René, amounted to about US$16 million. Estimated defense expenditures for 1993 are thought to be comparable.

Training and Morale

Historically, with the exception of the air wing, the armed forces have been poorly trained and suffered from low morale. Beginning in the late 1980s, the government began to establish a military training infrastructure. On May 16, 1987, the first noncommissioned officers (NCOs) passed through a three-month refresher course at the SPDF NCO Training School. At the graduation ceremony, Chief of Staff James Michel told the NCOs that a new career development program would give each of them "an equal opportunity to develop his career and rise up the promotion scale to the highest ranks." On May 7, 1988, the SPDF, supported by the People's Militia, conducted a simulated offensive at the Grand Police Military Training Center. The troops covered offensive and defensive military tactics, weapons training, field communications and engineering, first aid, map reading, and other military subjects. On June 2, 1990, officials opened the Seychelles Defence Academy, which provided training courses for the SPDF, the People's Militia, and the police. Despite these efforts, the SPLA and the navy wing have failed to improve their capabilities. Personnel still suffer from low morale, poor qualifications, and ineffective combat skills.

The air wing, however, shows a relatively high degree of professionalism. All pilots receive training in the Cessna 152 before moving on to the Britten-Norman. After acquiring the requisite number of flying hours and the necessary commercial licenses, most pilots are seconded to the national airline, Air Seychelles. Some pilots are assigned to the Seychelles government, which operates one Cessna Citation and one Cessna Caravan II as passenger and light transport aircraft.

Foreign Military Assistance

Seychelles traditionally received foreign military assistance from numerous nations, including Tanzania, India, the former Soviet Union, North Korea, and the United States. Of these, Tanzania has been Seychelles' most important military ally. The

two countries initiated military relations shortly after René established the People's Militia; twelve Tanzanian military advisers arrived in Seychelles to help train the militia. By 1980 the TPDF maintained an estimated 140-member contingent in Seychelles, including a thirty-member training team. After the expulsion of French technicians in 1979, Tanzania reinforced its presence in Seychelles. In June 1979, Seychellois military units participated in a joint exercise with TPDF and Malagasy units. On November 26, 1981, the day after Colonel Hoare's coup attempt failed, 400 TPDF personnel started patrolling Mahé International Airport and the coast to prevent a return of Hoare's mercenaries. According to some Western observers, the intervention of Tanzanian military personnel during the August 1982 SPDF mutiny probably saved the René regime.

India has been one of René's oldest military allies. On June 5, 1982, India gave Seychelles two Chetak helicopters as a Liberation Day gift for the People's Air Force; after one crashed, Bombay provided another. By the early 1990s, the Indian presence in Seychelles included a colonel who managed the Seychelles Defence Academy, and two police advisers.

Between 1979 and 1990, the former Soviet Union provided an array of military aid to Seychelles, including small arms, ammunition, SA–7 surface-to-air missiles, artillery, patrol boats, and petroleum. Additionally, the former Soviet Union deployed an unknown number of Soviet military and technical advisers to Seychelles. By December 1990, changing political conditions in Moscow forced the former Soviet Union to terminate its military aid program and withdraw all its advisers from Seychelles. In exchange for aid provided, the former Soviet Union hoped to gain access to Seychelles naval ports. René did allow Soviet warships to make port calls, but he never signed a formal access agreement with Moscow.

By 1983 North Korea had deployed a fifty- to sixty-member military advisory team to Seychelles. These personnel assumed responsibility for training the SPLA. Unconfirmed reports also indicated that the North Koreans instructed the Presidential Guard. By 1988, according to Michel, the North Koreans had left Seychelles.

The United States provided security assistance to Seychelles to retain access to the United States Air Force Satellite Tracking station at La Misère. Aid activities focused on the IMET program, civic action, and coastal security. Since FY 1984, a small number of Seychellois military personnel have attended

IMET courses in technical and professional areas such as communications and studied at infantry and command and staff level military schools. Other training includes basic infantry, naval, and coast guard operations courses. During the early 1990s, the United States hoped to expand its security assistance to the Seychelles to include air-sea rescue, explosives ordinance disposal, and military working dog training.

Since the end of the Cold War, Seychelles increasingly has relied on India and the United States for foreign military assistance. France also has provided some maintenance aid to the Seychellois coast guard. Some Western observers maintain that, with the establishment of diplomatic relations, South Africa could initiate a military aid program in Seychelles within a few years.

Penal System

The Seychellois penal system is based on English common law and Napoleonic civil law. The judiciary system includes the magistrates' (or small claims) courts, the Supreme (or trial) Court, and the Court of Appeal. The president also exercises quasi-judicial powers, especially in national security cases. Seychellois law requires that military personnel be tried by court martial unless the president decrees otherwise.

The courts often sentence criminals to the Grand Police Camp, a high security prison run by the army on Mahé Island. Amnesty International reports that prison authorities often require prisoners to perform excessively strenuous labor.

Human Rights

From 1977 to 1993, Seychelles was an authoritarian, one-party, socialist state. The country's 1979 constitution failed to provide for basic human rights, including them instead in a preamble as a goal of the Seychellois people. René has also intimidated dissidents and opponents by threatening to invoke the Public Security Act, which allows for indefinite detention in security cases. Moreover, he often exiles opponents or orders the confiscation of their property. Over the years, numerous credible reports indicate that the police beat prisoners. Invariably, the government dismisses complaints against police officers charged with such practices. By the early 1990s, the Seychellois human rights record had improved somewhat as the government adopted a less belligerent attitude toward dissidents and opposition groups. In June 1993, a referendum was

held on the new constitution, and in July 1993 multiparty elections were held for the National Assembly and the presidency.

Comoros

Security Concerns

Comoros faces no external threats. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, various groups of European mercenaries, all supposedly supported by foreign powers, played a significant role in Comoran domestic politics.

Since independence the Comoran government has contended with several internal threats. This domestic instability reflects the weakness of the island's central government, the unpopularity of its rulers, and the presence of European mercenaries. On July 6, 1975, the Comoran Chamber of Deputies approved a unilateral declaration of independence from France, named Ahmed Abdallah as president, and constituted itself as the National Assembly. On August 3, 1975, a group of prominent citizens, radicals, and technocrats overthrew the Abdallah regime. These individuals replaced the National Assembly with a National Executive Council, led by Prince Said Mohammed Jaffar. In January 1976, Ali Soilih succeeded Jaffar as president.

Soilih embarked immediately on a revolutionary program, based on Maoist and Islamic philosophies, that sought to develop an economically self-sufficient and ideologically progressive state. In addition to alienating France, which terminated its aid and technical assistance programs to Comoros, Soilih's policies aroused resentment among the island's traditional leaders. To make matters worse, Soilih established his version of Mao's Red Guards, known as the Commando Moissy. These vigilantes, trained by Tanzanian military advisers, further alienated Comoran society by acting as a repressive political police. Growing popular discontent resulted in four unsuccessful coup attempts against the Soilih regime during its two-and-a-half-year existence.

On May 12–13, 1978, a fifty-member European mercenary unit, hired by Ahmed Abdallah in France and led by French Colonel Robert Denard, finally overthrew Soilih. Two weeks later, security personnel killed Soilih, allegedly while he was trying to escape from house arrest. Ahmed Abdallah and his former deputy, Mohamed Ahmed, then became co-presidents. Although it initially experienced some opposition because of

Diégo-Suarez, near Antsiranana, site of Malagasy port and naval base
Courtesy Thomas P. Ofcansky

the role played by Denard and his mercenaries in the coup, the new government eventually gained popular support. Its popularity rested on its ability to restore relations with France, which resumed economic, military, and cultural aid to the islands, and to gain assistance from the European Community and several Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait. On October 22, 1978, Abdallah was elected to a six-year term as president.

Despite the influx of foreign aid, political conditions in Comoros remained unsettled, largely because Abdallah failed to establish a government that adequately represented people on the outlying islands of Njazidja (Grande Comore), Nzwani (Anjouan), and Mwali (Mohéli). Moreover, Abdallah frequently used repressive methods against his real and imagined adversaries. In this turbulent atmosphere, opponents of Abdal-

lah's regime made at least four unsuccessful attempts to overthrow his government.

In February 1981, loyal Presidential Guard (Garde Présidentielle—GP) units crushed an army mutiny on the main island of Njazidja, and the authorities subsequently arrested about 150 people. In December 1983, another plot surfaced after the arrest of a group of British mercenaries in Australia. According to the Comoran government, they had planned to overthrow Abdallah on behalf of a former Comoran diplomat, Said Ali Kemal. A March 1985 plot against Abdallah by the GP also failed and resulted in seventeen people being sentenced to forced labor for life and fifty others being imprisoned. In November 1987, French mercenaries and South African military advisers based in Comoros reportedly thwarted a coup by a small number of GP and armed forces personnel.

In late November 1989, the Abdallah regime finally fell after members of the GP, which included several European advisers under Colonel Denard's command, assassinated the president. As outlined in the constitution, the Supreme Court president, Said Mohamed Djohar, became interim head of state, pending a presidential election. Denard and his associates, however, engineered a coup attempt against Djohar, disarmed the army, and killed at least twenty-seven police. Growing French and South African pressure forced Colonel Denard to leave Comoros for South Africa. In April 1990, the Comoran government announced that France would maintain a military team on the islands for two years to train local security forces.

Despite the presence of French troops and a general amnesty for all political prisoners, Comoros continued to suffer from internal instability. On August 18–19, 1990, armed rebels unsuccessfully tried to overthrow Djohar by attacking various French installations on the island of Njazidja. A small group of European mercenaries allegedly supported the coup attempt and believed that the Djohar regime would fall if they could force the French to withdraw from the islands. The authorities detained more than twenty people in connection with the uprising. Another coup attempt occurred on September 26, 1992, when Lieutenant Said Mohamed and 100 Comoran army personnel tried to overthrow Djohar. According to plotters, the coup's purpose was "to ensure state security and to put in place a true democracy." Troops loyal to Djohar quickly crushed this coup attempt. Since then, political instability has continued to plague Comoros for several reasons. In part,

there is opposition to Djohar, and, despite two democratic legislative elections, clear majorities are lacking in the National Assembly, leading to considerable internal political maneuvering. Moreover, economic hardships contribute to unrest.

The Military and the Government

Until independence, Comoros had no armed forces. Since then, the government has maintained a small military establishment, which, by international standards, possesses minimal capabilities. Despite the lack of a strong military tradition, however, the armed forces have played a significant role in the country's political life. In particular, the GP, which is the best trained and best armed of all security services, has repeatedly intervened in politics and eventually controlled Comoros. Such activities understandably have attracted considerable attention, especially because the GP includes European mercenaries in its ranks and in senior positions. Over the years, numerous reports, some of them unconfirmed, suggested that foreign powers such as France, Britain, or South Africa provided these mercenaries with money and weapons. By the early 1990s, most Western observers believed that as long as French military forces remained in the islands, the Comoran armed forces were unlikely to maintain a high political profile.

Little information exists about Comoran defense economics. In 1987, the most recent year for which figures were available, the government budgeted about 910 million Comoran francs (Cf; for value of the Comoran franc—see Glossary) for defense expenditures.

Armed Forces

The national army, the Comoran Armed Forces (Forces Armées Comoriennes—FAC), maintains a personnel strength of approximately 700 to 800 men. The FAC inventory includes an array of small arms and light military vehicles. A small military aviation element operates a Cessna 402B and an AS–350B Écureuil. The aircraft are used for Very Important Persons (VIP) transport. Comoros lacks a navy. Most military training occurs in Comoros; however, a small number of army personnel have received some foreign training, primarily in France and the United States. Historically, army morale has been low, largely because of the GP's predominance and influence. After taking control of the country in December 1989, France dis-

solved the Comoran army and devised a multiyear plan to organize a new Comoran Armed Forces.

State Security Services

The 600-member GP reports to the president's office. After members of the GP assassinated President Abdallah in November 1989, however, the GP, under Colonel Denard's command, controlled the country. France assumed responsibility for Comoran security the following month, and immediately announced that the GP would be limited to a ceremonial role with a reduced number of troops. The 500-member National Police Force (Force de Police Nationale) is headquartered in Moroni, with detachments in the other islands.

Foreign Military Assistance

Since independence, Comoros has received foreign military assistance from Tanzania, France, South Africa, and the United States. Only France and the United States continued to provide military aid to Comoros as of mid-1994.

Tanzania hoped to limit Western influence in Comoros by providing military aid to President Soilih. It was able to deploy about 100 military advisers to the islands to train the army and the Commando Moissy, but Tanzania lacks the resources to make a significant long-term impact on the Comoran Armed Forces.

Historically, France has been the most important military player in Comoros, largely because it has strategic interests in the Indian Ocean and military installations on the islands of Reunion and Mayotte. Even before independence, France and Comoros signed a defense agreement in 1973; five years later, the two nations concluded a technical military assistance agreement. After the Soilih regime fell in 1978, French military advisers replaced European mercenaries and guaranteed Comoran security. On November 10, 1978, the two governments signed a military agreement that provided French training for Comoran Armed Forces and French military assistance in case of an attack on the islands. By January 1985, seventy-six Comoran military personnel had received training in France, and the French military had stationed twenty-three advisers in Comoros.

After the assassination of President Abdallah, France deployed 140 troops from the 21st Marine Paratroop Regiment and fifty officers and warrant officers from the Military Assis-

tance and Instruction Detachment. According to a December 16, 1989, statement by President Djohar, the latter unit was supposed to remain on the islands for one to two years to train and to reorganize the Comoran Armed Forces. In August 1994, France continued to maintain a military presence in Comoros.

During the late 1980s, South Africa and Comoros maintained a discreet but significant military relationship. The South African government constructed a radio-monitoring station on the islands. Also, according to the *Indian Ocean Newsletter,* Comoros was a transshipment point for arms from South Africa to Iran and to the Mozambican National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicano—Renamo) rebel movement in Mozambique. South Africa also funded the GP, under Colonel Denard's command. In late 1989, South Africa severed its connection to the GP and Colonel Denard, thereby allowing France to become the dominant foreign military power on the islands.

Since the late 1980s, the United States has maintained a small IMET program in Comoros. Initially, five to six Comoran officers received basic military training and English language instruction in the United States. In 1989 the IMET program was expanded to include professional military education and technical training courses for a small number of Comoran military personnel. By the early 1990s, the IMET program complemented the ongoing French effort to reorganize the Comoran armed forces. However, the United States embassy in Comoros closed in September 1993.

Penal System

The Comoran legal system rests on Islamic law and an inherited French legal code. Village elders or civilian courts settle most disputes. The judiciary is independent of the legislature and the executive. The Supreme Court acts as a Constitutional Council in resolving constitutional questions and supervising presidential elections. As High Court of Justice, the Supreme Court also arbitrates cases in which the government is accused of malpractice. The Supreme Court consists of two members selected by the president, two elected by the Federal Assembly, and one by the council of each island.

Human Rights

In the African context, Comoros' human rights record is above average. However, in early 1979, Comoran authorities

arrested some 300 supporters of Soilih's regime and imprisoned them without trial in Moroni. Four of Soilih's former ministers also disappeared. For the next two years, arrests, shootings, and disappearances continued. Under pressure from France, some trials were held, but many Comorans remained political prisoners, despite protests from Amnesty International and other humanitarian organizations. The Abdallah regime also restricted freedom of speech, press, association, citizens' rights to change their government, women's rights, and workers' rights. After Abdallah's death in late 1989, the country's human rights record improved. The European mercenaries who ruled the island ordered only a few arrests and released nearly all political prisoners who had been detained after the 1985 and 1987 coup attempts.

This trend continued until March 1990, when Djohar became president of Comoros. Those who opposed his regime were subjected to various human rights violations. For example, after an unsuccessful August 18–19, 1990, coup attempt, the authorities detained twenty-four people without trial in connection with the uprising. In October 1990, the security forces killed Max Veillard, the leader of the coup. The following year, after efforts to remove him from the presidency for negligence failed, Djohar ordered the arrest of several Supreme Court judges and declared a state of emergency. Another failed coup attempt on September 26, 1992, prompted the authorities to detain more than twenty people, including former Minister of Interior Omar Tamou. Police held these detainees incommunicado and reportedly tortured some of them. The Comoran Association for Human Rights (Association Comorienne des Droits Humains), which had been established in May 1990, also accused the Djohar regime of executing without trial individuals suspected of supporting armed opposition groups. In 1994 groups such as Amnesty International continued to monitor the human rights situation in Comoros, and to speak out against the Djohar regime.

Maldives

Security Concerns

Since independence Maldives has faced no external threats but has experienced three major internal threats. In May 1980, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom disclosed details of an abortive coup against his regime. According to Gayoom,

former president Ibrahim Nasir, supported by nine British ex-Special Air Services mercenaries, masterminded the plot. Nasir denied this allegation, but in April 1981 the authorities sentenced Ahmed Naseem, former deputy minister of fisheries and brother-in-law of Nasir, to life imprisonment for plotting to overthrow Gayoom. Attempts to extradite Nasir from Singapore failed. In July 1990, Gayoom pardoned Nasir in absentia, ostensibly because of his role in the independence struggle. In 1983 Gayoom faced another unsuccessful coup attempt.

The most serious challenge to Gayoom occurred in November 1988, when former Maldivian businessperson Abdullah Luthufi led a seaborne mercenary force of about 150 Sri Lankan Tamil separatists who invaded Maldives and attempted to seize key government installations. Gayoom asked the Indian government for assistance, and Bombay deployed a 1,600-member contingent to Maldives. This unit quickly suppressed the coup attempt and restored order. In September 1989, Gayoom commuted to life imprisonment the death sentences imposed on twelve Sri Lankans and four Maldivians who participated in the coup attempt. A few weeks later, India withdrew its remaining 160 troops from Maldives. By the early 1990s, internal security had improved, largely because Gayoom had embarked on a democratization program.

Armed Forces in National Life

For hundreds of years, Maldives had not experienced security problems and therefore had no need for a military establishment. In 1956, however, Maldives allowed Britain to establish a Royal Air Force base on Gan, an island in Addu atoll. As part of a 1965 accord, the British gained access to Gan until 1986, but budgetary retrenchment forced them to pull out in 1976. In 1977 Maldives rejected a request by the former Soviet Union to lease the Gan facilities. By the early 1980s, Maldives maintained only one security unit, the National Security Service (NSS). This organization, which numbered fewer than 1,000 personnel, performed army, police, and maritime duties. Its mission includes preserving internal security and patrolling the country's territorial waters for illegal fishing and smuggling. After the 1988 coup attempt, the government expanded the NSS to about 1,500 personnel; by 1990, the NSS had grown to approximately 1,800 personnel.

Penal System

Maldivians follow the sharia or Islamic law. Occasionally, the courts order convicted criminals to be flogged. Usually, however, punishment is limited to fines, compensatory payment, house arrest, imprisonment, or banishment to a remote island. The country's judicial system includes a High Court and eight lesser courts in Male. The High Court handles politically sensitive cases and acts as a court of appeal. Each of the lesser courts deals with cases that involve debt, theft, or property claims. All-purpose courts exist on other islands. Maldives has no jury trials; Islamic law judges conduct trials, which are open to the public. The president appoints all judges and has the final word in all legal cases.

Human Rights

Maldives has a fairly good human rights record, but individual freedoms are restricted in areas such as speech and press, religion, the right of citizens to change their government, and women's and workers' rights. Other problems include arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, and lack of an independent judiciary. Despite Gayoom's commitment to democratization, Western observers believe that these problems will continue to mar the country's human rights record.

Notwithstanding the end of the Cold War, the Indian Ocean island countries undoubtedly will continue to maintain a degree of strategic importance for nations such as France, South Africa, and India. It is unlikely that any of these nations will intervene militarily in any of the region's islands. It also is unlikely that any of the islands will experience significant internal security problems in the near future. As a result of dwindling foreign military assistance, the security forces on each of the islands probably will undergo some reorganization or downsizing in the years ahead. Consequently, by the turn of the century, the military capabilities of each of the Indian Ocean islands will be far less than they are today.

* * *

Historically, various foreign and indigenous armed forces have played a significant role in Indian Ocean life. Available military literature focuses mainly on Madagascar. Useful historical works for this country include *The Rising of the Red Shawls: A Revolt in Madagascar, 1895–1899* by Stephen D.K. Ellis and two

works of Samuel Pasfield Oliver: *Examples of Military Operations in Madagascar by Foreign Powers and Native Campaigns, 1642–1881* and *French Operations in Madagascar, 1883–1885.* Two of the more important studies about Madagascar's role in World War II are *Into Madagascar* and *The King's African Rifles in Madagascar,* both by Kenneth Cecil Gander Dower.

Several essential works for the postindependence period include Mike Hoare's *The Seychelles Affair,* Anthony Mockler's *The New Mercenaries: The History of the Hired Soldier from the Congo to the Seychelles,* and Philip M. Allen's *Security and Nationalism in the Indian Ocean: Lessons from the Latin Quarter Islands.*

For material about the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, see *The Politics of Intrusion: The Super Powers and the Indian Ocean* by Kim C. Beazley and Ian Clark. Other works of interest include Monoranjan Bezboruah's *U.S. Strategy in the Indian Ocean: The International Response,* Vijay Kumar Bhasin's *Super Power Rivalry in the Indian Ocean,* and *The Indian Ocean: Its Political, Economic, and Military Importance* edited by Alvin J. Cottrell and R.M. Burrell.

Material about the military aspects of the Indian Ocean and its islands exists in a variety of periodical sources, including the *Indian Ocean Newsletter, African Defence Journal, Africa Research Bulletin,* and *Africa Confidential.* Other useful publications are *New African, Africa Events, Africa News, Focus on Africa,* and the *Journal of Modern African Studies.* Two International Institute for Strategic Studies annuals, *The Military Balance* and *Strategic Survey,* are essential for understanding the evolution of Indian Ocean security forces. The same is true of three annuals: *Africa Contemporary Record, Africa South of the Sahara,* and *SIPRI World Armaments and Disarmament.* The last is published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography).

Appendix

Table

1 Metric Conversion Coefficients and Factors
2 Madagascar: Balance of Payments, Selected Years, 1984–92
3 Madagascar: Production of Major Crops, Selected Years, 1986–92
4 Madagascar: Fish Production, 1992, 1993, and 1994
5 Madagascar: Industries Within the Export Processing Zones, 1989, 1991, and 1993
6 Madagascar: Direction of Trade, Selected Years, 1984–92
7 Madagascar: Foreign Assistance, Selected Years, 1979–91
8 Security Forces of Indian Ocean Island Countries, 1994
9 Major Equipment of Madagascar Armed Forces, 1994

Table 1. Metric Conversion Coefficients and Factors

When you know	Multiply by	To find
Millimeters	0.04	inches
Centimeters	0.39	inches
Meters	3.3	feet
Kilometers	0.62	miles
Hectares	2.47	acres
Square kilometers	0.39	square miles
Cubic meters	35.3	cubic feet
Liters	0.26	gallons
Kilograms	2.2	pounds
Metric tons	0.98	long tons
	1.1	short tons
	2,204.0	pounds
Degrees Celsius (Centigrade)	1.8 and add 32	degrees Fahrenheit

Table 2. Madagascar: Balance of Payments, Selected Years, 1984–92[1]
(in millions of United States dollars)

	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992
Merchandise exports, f.o.b.[2]	337	323	284	319	328
Merchandise imports, f.o.b.	-360	-331	-319	-566	-466
Trade balance	-23	-8	-34	-248	-138
Export of services	58	80	131	209	178
Import of services	-306	-365	-443	-450	-411
Net private transfers	-1	21	38	49	88
Net public transfers	78	132	158	188	148
Current account balance	-193	-141	-149	-251	-136
Direct and portfolio investment	n.a.[3]	n.a.	n.a.	22	21
Other capital	-23	22	-22	-40	-109
Capital account balance	-23	22	-22	-18	-88
Errors and omissions	n.a.	n.a.	53	-9	-52
Changes in reserves (- means increase)	-25	-62	-39	3	1

[1] Figures may not add to totals because of rounding.
[2] f.o.b.—free on board.
[3] n.a.—not available.

Source: Based on information from Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Madagascar, 1994–95*, London, 1994, 28.

Table 3. Madagascar: Production of Major Crops, Selected Years, 1986–92
(in thousands of tons)

Crop	1986	1988	1990	1992
Bananas	225	260	220	220
Cassava	2,421	2,200	2,292	2,320
Cloves	7	12	10	11
Cocoa	2	3	4	3
Coffee	59	66	85	80
Corn	153	156	155	165
Cotton (seed)	50	46	32	26
Peanuts	33	30	30	32
Rice (paddy)	2,230	2,235	2,420	2,200
Sisal	20	20	20	18
Sugar (raw)	102	122	2,000	1,724
Sweet potatoes	467	485	486	487
Tobacco	5	4	4	4
Vanilla (prepared)	1	2	9	7

Source: Based on information from Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Madagascar, 1994–95, London*, 1994, 13.

Table 4. Madagascar: Fish Production, 1992, 1993, and 1994
(in tons)

	1992	1993	1994[1]
Crabs	960	1,200	1,500
Lobsters	460	570	650
Shrimp	7,890	8,600	10,100
Tuna	9,000	11,000	11,500
Other	57,900	66,000	68,000
Freshwater fishing	25,000	27,000	28,000
Total production	101,210	114,370	119,750

[1] Forecast.

Source: Based on information from Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles* [London], No. 2, 1994, 26.

Table 5. Madagascar: Industries Within the Export Processing Zones, 1989, 1991, and 1993

	1989		1991		1993	
	Persons Employed	Capital Invested[1]	Persons Employed	Capital Invested[1]	Persons Employed	Capital Invested[1]
Agro-processing	0	0	588	10,248	1,062	17,789
Textiles and clothing	5,464	12,487	6,456	21,041	18,965	66,985
Hides and skins	148	958	200	915	423	4,420
Wood manufacturers	0	0	750	20,726	829	21,315
Electronics	0	0	51	119	237	1,513
Chemical	0	0	28	427	44	777
Watchmaking	0	0	226	2,739	226	2,739
Other	0	0	332	5,901	1,362	11,550
Promotion of export processing zones (EPZs)	66	111,660	66	111,660	66	111,660
TOTAL	5,678	125,105	8,697	173,776	23,214	238,748

[1] In millions of Malagasy francs (for value of the Malagasy franc—see Glossary).

Source: Based on information from Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles* [London], No. 2, 1994, 27.

Table 6. Madagascar: Direction of Trade, Selected Years, 1984–92[1]
(in millions of United States dollars)

	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992
Exports					
Industrialized countries					
France	107.4	104.2	95.1	111.3	116.8
Germany[2]	38.8	24.3	20.8	25.6	38.6
Japan	36.7	35.0	31.4	20.0	28.7
Russia[3]	2.7	6.6	7.0	2.3	2.7
United States	67.4	48.2	33.7	107.7	50.9
Other	47.9	59.7	39.2	76.1	73.3
Total industrialized countries	300.9	278.1	227.1	342.8	311.0
Developing countries					
Africa	7.2	11.5	23.0	36.7	42.2
Asia	15.2	22.3	12.1	22.3	27.1
Europe	9.8	1.1	8.2	2.7	1.0
Latin America	0.1	0.1	—[4]	0.6	0.3
Middle East	0.1	—	3.9	0.1	1.7
Other	—	—	0.1	0.2	0.2
Total developing countries	32.4	34.9	47.2	62.4	72.3
Total exports	333.3	313.0	274.4	404.7	383.5
Imports					
Industrialized countries					
France	126.9	113.2	124.9	184.4	183.5
Germany	17.5	24.9	30.5	34.8	23.9
Japan	10.2	22.3	23.3	36.5	26.5
Russia	8.3	37.2	32.9	3.1	3.8
United States	42.9	37.9	13.2	13.1	6.7
Other	44.8	34.2	40.6	72.1	68.8
Total industrialized countries	250.6	269.8	265.4	344.1	313.2
Developing countries					
Africa	1.8	7.6	7.7	31.2	37.4
Asia	92.3	42.1	44.9	86.2	95.3
Europe	1.6	16.7	19.6	11.4	12.9
Latin America	1.8	2.7	2.7	13.4	13.0

Table 6. Madagascar: Direction of Trade, Selected Years, 1984–92[1]
(in millions of United States dollars)

	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992
Middle East	132.6	0.3	20.1	30.3	52.0
Other	48.2	0.5	3.7	74.7	90.4
Total developing countries	278.3	69.3	98.7	247.2	301.0
Total imports	528.9	339.6	363.9	590.3	614.1

[1] Forecast.
[2] West Germany before 1991.
[3] Soviet Union before 1992.
[4] — means negligible.

Source: Based on information from International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1986*, Washington, 1986, 262–63; and *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1993*, Washington, 1993, 262–63.

Table 7. Madagascar: Foreign Assistance, Selected Years, 1979–91
(in millions of United States dollars)

	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991
Bilateral assistance					
France	38.4	96.4	47.4	108.5	157.0
Germany[1]	2.1	12.6	16.3	14.3	30.3
Italy	0.2	1.6	2.6	3.7	21.6
Japan	21.0	28.3	11.6	42.8	56.8
Switzerland	5.8	6.8	4.8	25.8	15.3
United States	3.0	15.0	17.0	13.0	71.0
Other	7.8	7.4	5.7	9.5	13.5
Total bilateral assistance	78.3	168.1	105.4	217.6	365.5
Multilateral assistance					
African Development Fund	—[2]	2.0	7.2	8.7	17.7
European Economic Community	15.8	21.6	17.8	30.6	17.3
International Development Association	12.6	33.1	58.4	51.0	106.0
Other	12.5	23.9	11.7	18.6	50.4
Total multilateral assistance	40.9	80.6	95.1	108.9	191.4
Other	13.8	15.0	0.0	2.7	0.0
TOTAL	133.0	263.7	200.5	329.2	556.9

[1] West Germany before 1991.
[2] — means negligible.

Source: Based on information from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries*, Paris, 1991.

Table 8. Security Forces of Indian Ocean Island Countries, 1994

Country	Personnel
Madagascar	
People's Armed Forces (Forces Armées Populaires—FAP)	
Army	20,000
Aeronaval force	1,000
National Gendarmerie	7,500
Civil Police	3,000
Mobile Police Group	1,000
Presidential Guard	1,200
Mauritius	
Special Mobile Force (SMF)	1,300
Police	4,000
Special Support Unit	240
National Coast Guard	500
Very Important Persons Security Unit	100
Seychelles	
Seychelles People's Defence Forces	
Seychelles People's Liberation Army	800
Coast Guard (includes 100-member air wing and 80 marines)	300
People's Militia	1,000
Police	560
Presidential Guard	300
Comoros	
Comoran Armed Forces	700–800
National Police Force	500
Presidential Guard	600[1]
Maldives	
National Security Service	1,800

[1] Undergoing reorganization.

Source: Based on information from *The Military Balance, 1994–1995*, London, 230–32.

Table 9. Major Equipment of Madagascar Armed Forces, 1994

Type and Description	Country of Origin	In Inventory
Light tanks		
PT-76	Soviet Union	12
Reconnaissance		
BRDM-2 armored cars	-do-	35
M-8 armored scout cars	United States	8
M-3A1 armored scout cars	-do-	20
FV-701 Ferret scout cars	Britain	10
Armored personnel carriers		
M-3A1	United States	30
Towed artillery		
ZIS-3 76mm	Soviet Union	12
M-101 105mm	United States	n.a.
D-30 122mm	Soviet Union	12
Recoilless guns		
M-40A1 106mm	United States	n.a.[1]
Mortars		
M-37 82mm	Soviet Union	n.a.
M-43 120mm	-do-	8
Air defense guns		
ZPU-4 14.5mm	-do-	50
37mm Type 55	-do-	20
Fighter/ground attack aircraft		
MiG-21FL Fishbed	-do-	8
MiG-17F Fresco	-do-	4
Transport		
An-26 Curl	-do-	4
Yak-40 Codling	-do-	2
BN-2 Defender	Britain	3
C-212 Aviocar	Spain	2
Helicopters		
Mi-8 Hip	Soviet Union	6
Liaison		
Cessna 310R	United States	1
Cessna 337	-do-	3
PA-23 Aztec	-do-	1
Training		
Cessna 172	-do-	4
Patrol craft, inshore		
Malaika PR-48	France	1
Amphibious		
Toky (Batram design)		
Landing ship, medium	-do-	1

Table 9. Major Equipment of Madagascar Armed Forces, 1994

Type and Description	Country of Origin	In Inventory
Landing ship, assault	unknown	1
EDIC-type landing craft, tank	France	1

[1] n.a.—not available.

Source: Based on information from *The Military Balance, 1994–1995*, London, 1994, 230–31.

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Glossary

CFA—Communauté Financière d'Afrique (African Financial Community). The CFA covers those African countries whose currencies are linked with the French franc at a fixed rate of exchange.

Comoran franc (CF)—One Comoran franc = 100 centimes; in June 1995, US$1.00 = CF363.98.

crown colony—A colony of the British Commonwealth over which the crown maintains some control, as through appointment of the governor.

European Community (EC)—*See* European Union.

European Currency Unit (ECU)—Standard currency unit of the European Union (*q.v.*); in April 1995, ECU1 = US$0.75.

European Union (EU)—Formerly the European Community, it was established by the Maastricht Treaty of December 1991 to expand European cooperation from economic and commercial into monetary, security, and judicial matters. It officially came into being at the end of 1993.

exclusive economic zone (EEZ)—A wide belt of sea and seabed adjacent to the national boundaries where the state claims preferential fishing rights and control over the exploitation of mineral and other natural resources. Madagascar claims a 150-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone. Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, and Maldives all claim 200 nautical miles. Boundary situations with neighboring states sometimes prevent the extension of the exclusive economic zones to the full limits claimed.

fiscal year (FY)—Same as the calendar year for all except Mauritius, in which it runs from July 1 to June 30.

Franc Zone—A monetary union among countries whose currencies are linked to the French franc. Members are France and its overseas appendages and fourteen African countries, including Comoros.

gross domestic product (GDP)—A value measure of the flow of domestic goods and services produced by an economy over a period of time, such as a year. Only output values of goods for final consumption and intermediate production are assumed to be included in the final prices. GDP is sometimes aggregated and shown at market prices, mean-

ing that indirect taxes and subsidies have been eliminated; the result is GDP at factor cost. The word "gross" indicates that deductions for depreciation of physical assets have not been made. *See also* gross national product.

gross national product (GNP)—Gross domestic product (*q.v.*) plus the net income or loss stemming from transactions with foreign countries. GNP is the broadest measurement of the output of goods and services by an economy. It can be calculated at market prices, which include indirect taxes and subsidies. Because indirect taxes and subsidies are only transfer payments, GNP is often calculated at factor cost, removing indirect taxes and subsidies.

import substitution—The replacement of imports by domestically produced goods, often supported by tariffs or import quotas, and motivated by foreign-exchange considerations.

International Development Association (IDA)—*See* World Bank.

International Finance Corporation (IFC)—*See* World Bank.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)—Established along with the World Bank (*q.v.*) in 1945, the IMF is a specialized agency affiliated with the United Nations and is responsible for stabilizing international exchange rates and payments. The main business of the IMF is the provision of loans to its members (including industrialized and developing countries) when they experience balance of payments difficulties. These loans frequently carry conditions that require substantial internal economic adjustments by the recipients, most of which are developing countries.

Lomé Convention—The first Lomé Convention (Lomé I) came into force in 1976. Lomé II came into effect in 1981, Lomé III in 1985, and Lomé IV in 1990. The convention covers economic relations between the members of the European Economic Community (EEC) and their former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP). The convention allows most ACP exports to enter the EEC duty-free or at special rates and, among other things, provides funds through the Stabex system (*q.v.*) to offset adverse fluctuations in the prices of ACP exports.

London Club—An informal group of commercial banks that come together to negotiate a debt rescheduling agreement with a country. The group has two committees, an economics committee that develops economic data projec-

tions and a negotiating committee. Committee members usually come from the five principal banks that hold the largest amounts of a country's debt.

Malagasy franc (FMG)—1 Malagasy franc (franc malgache—FMG) = 100 centimes; in May 1995, US$1.00 = FMG4,236.9.

Mauritian rupee (MauR)—1 Mauritian rupee = 100 cents; in August 1995, US$1.00 = MauR14.43.

parastatal—A semi-autonomous, quasi-governmental, state-owned enterprise.

Paris Club—The informal name for a consortium of Western creditor countries (Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States) that have made loans or guaranteed export credits to developing nations and that meet in Paris to discuss borrowers' ability to repay debts. Paris Club deliberations often result in the tendering of emergency loans to countries in economic difficulty or in the rescheduling of debts. Formed in October 1962, the organization has no formal or institutional existence. Its secretariat is run by the French treasury. It has a close relationship with the International Monetary Fund (*q.v.*), to which all of its members except Switzerland belong, as well as with the World Bank (*q.v.*) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The Paris Club is also known as the Group of Ten (G–10).

rufiyaa (Rf)—Maldives currency; 1 rufiyaa = 100 laari; in June 1995, US$1.00 = Rf11.77.

Seychelles rupee (SRe)—1 Seychelles rupee = 100 cents; in August 1995, US$1.00 = SRe4.25.

Shia (from Shiat Ali, the Party of Ali)—A member of the smaller of the two great divisions of Islam. The Shia supported the claims of Ali and his line to presumptive right to the caliphate and leadership of the Muslim community, and on this issue they divided from the Sunni (*q.v.*) in the major schism within Islam. Later schisms have produced further divisions among the Shia over the identity and number of imams. Most Shia revere Twelve Imams, the last of whom is believed to be hidden from view.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)—Comprises the seven nations of South Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; founded as South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC)

organization at a meeting of foreign ministers in New Delhi on August 1–2, 1983; a second organizational meeting of foreign ministers was held in Thimphu in May 1985; inaugural meeting of heads of state and government in Dhaka on December 7–8, 1985. The goal is to effect economic, technical, and cultural cooperation and to provide a forum for discussions of South Asian political problems.

special drawing rights (SDRs)—Monetary units of the International Monetary Fund (*q.v.*) based on a basket of international currencies including the United States dollar, the German deutsche mark, the Japanese yen, the British pound sterling, and the French franc.

Stabex system—A system of export earnings stabilization set up by the European Community (EC—*q.v.*) in accordance with the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states. The system helps developing countries withstand fluctuations in the price of their agricultural products by paying compensation for lost export earnings.

Sunni—The larger of the two great divisions of Islam. The Sunni, who rejected the claims of Ali's line, believe that they are the true followers of the sunna, the guide to proper behavior set forth by Muhammad's personal deeds and utterances. *See also* Shia.

World Bank—Informal name used to designate a group of four affiliated international institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Development Association (IDA), International Finance Corporation (IFC), and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). The IBRD, established in 1945, has the primary purpose of providing loans to developing countries for productive projects. The IDA, a legally separate loan fund but administered by the staff of the IBRD, was set up in 1960 to furnish credits to the poorest developing countries on much easier terms than those of conventional IBRD loans. The IFC, founded in 1956, supplements the activities of the IBRD through loans and assistance specifically designed to encourage the growth of productive private enterprises in the less developed countries. The MIGA, founded in 1988, insures private foreign investment in developing countries against various noncommercial risks. The president and certain senior officers of the IBRD hold the same positions in the IFC. The four institutions are owned by the governments of the

countries that subscribe their capital. To participate in the World Bank group, member states must first belong to the International Monetary Fund (IMF—*q.v.*).

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